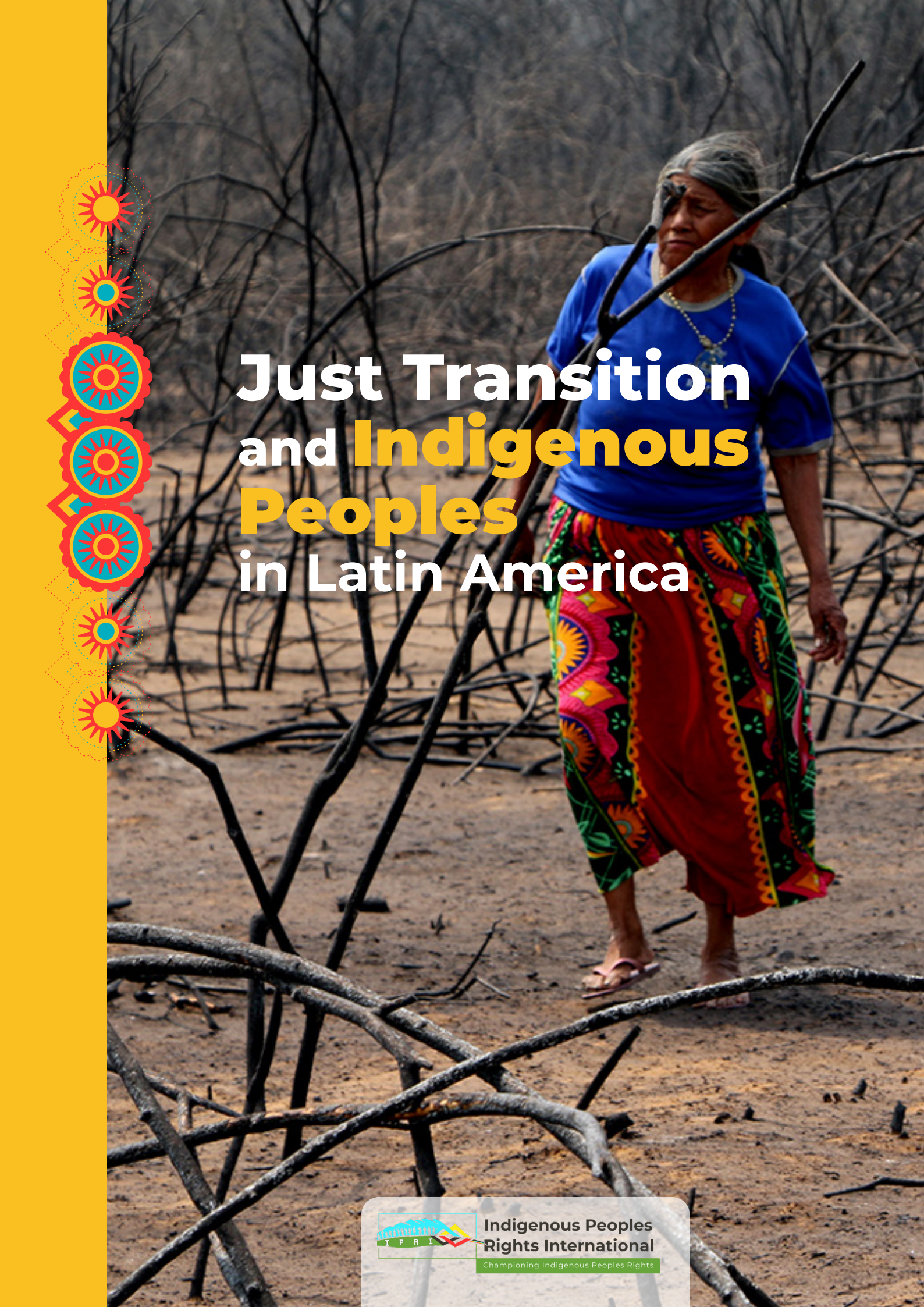


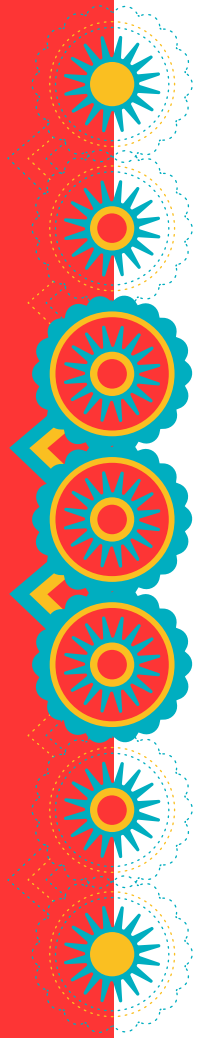


Just Transition and **Indigenous** **Peoples** in Latin America



Indigenous Peoples
Rights International

Championing Indigenous Peoples Rights



Just Transition and Indigenous Peoples in Latin America



**Indigenous Peoples
Rights International**

Championing Indigenous Peoples Rights



The Indigenous Peoples Rights International (IPRI) is a global Indigenous Peoples' organization established in 2019 in response to the grave situation of Indigenous Peoples who are increasingly being criminalized, killed, disappeared, and subjected to the worst forms of violence.

We are leading the Global Initiative to Address and Prevent Criminalization, Violence, and Impunity Against Indigenous Peoples—an Indigenous-led global effort to strengthen coordination, solidarity, and actions to prevent, respond to, and reduce acts of criminalization, violence, and impunity against Indigenous Peoples; and to provide better protection and access to justice for victims not only as individuals but as collectives or communities.

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Philippines

*COVER PHOTO:
An Ayoreo woman walking
on burned land after
deforestation*

*PHOTO CREDIT:
Iniciativa Amotocodie*

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Foreword

The world is racing to address the climate crisis through the expansion of renewable energy and the extraction of critical minerals needed to power it. While the energy transition away from fossil fuels is both necessary and urgent, its implementation is increasingly placing new pressures on Indigenous Peoples' lands, territories, and resources. Across many regions, Indigenous territories are becoming the new frontier for mining, energy infrastructure, and other so-called green investments.

What is often overlooked is that Indigenous Peoples have long been among the world's most effective stewards of nature. Their lands contain some of the planet's most important ecosystems, biodiversity, and carbon sinks. Evidence consistently shows that where Indigenous Peoples' rights and collective tenure are recognized, forests are healthier, biodiversity is better protected, and ecosystems are more resilient. Yet despite these contributions, Indigenous Peoples are frequently excluded from decisions affecting their territories and are often expected to bear the social and environmental costs of the transition.

Perhaps the greatest contradiction of the energy transition is that the peoples who have contributed least to the climate crisis and done the most to protect nature are now facing increasing threats from the very solutions intended to address it. Across Latin America and other regions, the rapid expansion of transition mineral mining and large-scale energy projects is resulting in land conflicts, environmental degradation, displacement, cultural loss, and attacks against Indigenous Peoples defending their rights and territories. Too often, these projects proceed without respect for Indigenous Peoples' rights to self-determination, lands and resources, and Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

Indigenous Peoples Rights International (IPRI) has taken up this issue because the energy transition cannot be considered just if it creates new sacrifice zones in Indigenous territories. There is nothing sustainable about solving one environmental crisis by creating another. Nor can climate action succeed if it disregards the rights, knowledge, and stewardship systems of Indigenous Peoples.

This report highlights both the challenges and the alternatives. It documents the impacts of energy transition projects on Indigenous Peoples while also demonstrating their leadership in advancing solutions grounded in rights, self-determination, and sustainability. The experiences presented here remind us that Indigenous Peoples are not obstacles to climate action. They are indispensable partners in achieving it.



A truly just transition requires more than replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy. It requires respect for human rights, recognition of Indigenous Peoples as rights holders and stewards of nature, and actions addressing the structural inequalities that is also driving environmental destruction and human rights violations with impunity. If the energy transition simply repackages old models of extractivism under a green label, it will fail both people and the planet. The path forward must be built on justice, equity, sustainability, and partnership with those who have safeguarded nature for generations.

JOAN CARLING

Executive Director

Indigenous Peoples Rights International (IPRI)



I. Introduction

The 28th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change agreed to “triple renewable energy capacity and double the global average annual rate of energy efficiency improvements by 2030” and to “transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems” to meet the aims of the Paris Agreement.¹ At COP30, State Parties adopted a decision under the Just Transition Work Programme recognizing the importance of respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples. These include the rights to prior and informed consent and self-determination, as well as protections for Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation and Initial Contact.²

However, many lands and resources used for energy transition in Latin America, such as transition minerals or lands for renewable energy projects, intersect with Indigenous Peoples’ territories. Accelerated extraction is already leading to irreversible impacts on Indigenous Peoples’ territories, lives, and cultures, and Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Defenders (IPHHRDs) frequently face reprisals and attacks, including assassinations.³

This report sheds light on the just transition through case studies in which Indigenous Peoples have experienced human rights violations or successfully asserted their rights and launched their own renewable energy initiatives. The five projects presented involve fossil fuels, transition mineral mining, and renewable energy development.





ENERGY TRANSITION AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Indigenous Peoples across Latin America are already facing severe impacts from climate change, including droughts, flooding, fires, crop failures, food insecurity, and displacement. But as the region hosts diverse ecosystems and landscapes sought for their resources, such as transition minerals, renewable energy, and fossil fuels, they also confront projects affecting their rights and livelihoods in the name of the energy transition and worsening the impacts of climate change.

Approximately 83% of energy transition mineral projects in Latin America are estimated to be located on or near Indigenous Peoples' territories.⁴ Globally, Indigenous Peoples are disproportionately affected by killings of human rights defenders, with mining being the most dangerous sector and Latin America being the most dangerous region.⁵

Indigenous Peoples are also disproportionately impacted by renewable energy projects and infrastructure. Between 2010 and 2020, 324 of 501 human rights abuse cases (61%) documented by the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre involved alleged violations of Indigenous Peoples' rights in the hydropower, wind, and solar energy sectors.⁶ They are further affected by sugarcane and soy plantations used for biofuel production, e.g., in the Amazon, Cerrado, and Chaco biomes.⁷

Confirmed records show 188 distinct Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation in the Amazon Basin and the Chaco region. They are "indigenous peoples or segments of indigenous peoples who do not maintain sustained contacts with the majority non-indigenous population, and who generally reject any type of contact with persons not part of their own people."⁸ Their cultural survival and continued existence are endangered by the cumulative threats from deforestation, mining, oil and gas extraction, hydroelectric dams, road development, fires, and drug trafficking, among others.⁹ Furthermore, of the 188 Indigenous Peoples in isolation, 128 are still not formally recognized by states, which means they lack effective protection measures.¹⁰

In Brazil, an investigation by *Reporter Brazil* found that 1,827 applications to mine copper, lithium, rare earths, and 13 other elements threaten over 80% of the Indigenous Peoples. It analyzed only the 55 records officially recognized or under review,¹¹ which signifies Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation not on those lists may be affected but may have been overlooked, and the number may be higher than reported.

The Just Transition Work Programme decision adopted at COP30 also invited State Parties to consider the rights and protections for Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation and Initial Contact in designing, implementing and supporting just transition pathways, including Nationally Determined Contributions, National Adaptation Plans, and Long-Term Low Emissions Development Strategies.¹² This is of particular relevance to the region, as states are now expected to include measures to protect the rights of these Indigenous Peoples as part of national climate plans, policies, and strategies.

But despite a global narrative on a just energy transition, Latin America is undergoing not an energy transition but an energy expansion. The Amazon region in particular has been described as the "new global oil frontier." Hosting approximately a fifth of



the world's identified fossil fuels, over 70% of its 794 oil blocks are under study or are available for market bidding.¹³

Indigenous Peoples, however, are mobilizing to defend their rights under the energy transition. In January 2025, Indigenous Peoples from Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, and Peru adopted a declaration denouncing the environmental and social impacts of lithium mining, demanding the binding implementation of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC).¹⁴ Separately, Indigenous Peoples' organizations from the Amazon Basin and from all biomes of Brazil adopted a political declaration in June 2025 calling for all their territories to be declared No-Go Zones for extractive activities, including mining, oil, and monoculture plantations.¹⁵

Litigation by Indigenous Peoples is also on the rise. A documentation of cases involving the energy transition shows that over half occurred in Latin America, with Indigenous Peoples filing almost half of the global cases.¹⁶ This trend underscores not just the increasing violations of Indigenous Peoples' rights but also risks to the viability of projects that do not respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples. And despite the increased impacts and risks they face, Indigenous Peoples are not mere victims. They are also leading solutions to the climate crisis and helping forge a just transition through national and international policy advocacy and developing their own territorial governance plans and renewable energy projects.

At the regional level in the Amazon Basin, Indigenous Peoples' organizations are advocating for commitments within the Amazon Treaty Cooperation Organization (OTCA) to transition away from fossil fuels without Indigenous Peoples' territories becoming sacrifice zones from the impacts of transition mineral extraction or extensive agriculture for biofuel production. At the local level, Indigenous Peoples are spearheading the development of not just renewable energy but also sustainable food systems and renewable energy-based transportation.¹⁷

The region has legal frameworks that recognize and provide for the protection of Indigenous Peoples' rights through national and international legal frameworks. Most countries with Indigenous Peoples have ratified the ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ILO Convention 169) and the American Convention on Human Rights, or are otherwise bound by the Inter-American human rights system. Most Latin American countries have ratified the main human rights treaties and voted in favor of the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Organization of American States Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. A significant number recognize the existence and certain rights of Indigenous Peoples in their Constitutions and have adopted legal, policy and institutional measures for the realization of these rights; however, an implementation gap persists.

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACrTHR) has developed extensive jurisprudence on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, including to communal property and cultural identity. This also covers states' obligation to consult Indigenous Peoples, to conduct independent environmental and social impact studies, and to obtain their FPIC prior to the approval of a permit or license for projects significantly affecting them, as well as to provide compensation and participation in benefits.¹⁸



Notably, in the case of *Mayagna (Sumo) Awas Tingni Community v. Nicaragua* (2001), the IACrtHR found that the granting of concessions to third parties on Indigenous Peoples' lands without prior delimitation, demarcation, and titling violated Indigenous Peoples' communal property rights. It ordered the State to abstain from any acts that could affect the territory until the land formalization process had been completed.¹⁹ This resonates with many Indigenous Peoples' movements in Latin America, for whom legal protection of their territorial and land rights, including through land titling and demarcation, is seen as a fundamental condition for a just transition.²⁰

Despite those legal frameworks and rulings, implementation is often inadequate, and Latin America is consistently the region with the highest number of allegations of violations of Indigenous Peoples' rights, including reprisals, attacks against Indigenous Peoples defending their lands and rights, as well as killings.²¹

With regard to Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation and recent contact, a growing body of jurisprudence affirms their rights and the obligations of states. A study of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) notes that "practically every country in the region has adopted different types of laws and regulations related to the protection of the territorial rights of Indigenous Peoples living in isolation," but those laws are "often not implemented effectively."²²

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has issued multiple precautionary measures to guarantee the life, physical integrity, and cultural survival of Indigenous Peoples in isolation, including by requiring states to, *inter alia*, guarantee the principle of no contact, to prevent forced or accidental contact, to protect and demarcate their territories, and to suspend or regulate activities that pose risks to them.²³ These obligations have been further clarified by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in its judgment in the *Tagaeri and Taromenani vs Ecuador* case, which affirmed that in order to guarantee the right to life, integrity, and cultural survival of Indigenous Peoples in isolation, states have an obligation to ensure the principles of precaution and of no contact and to prevent any third-party activities that could lead to intrusion or contact.²⁴

Against this legal, policy, and political backdrop in the region, the following case studies illustrate how the just transition is being implemented across different national contexts in Latin America.



II. Case Studies

The five cases in this report examine how the energy transition is affecting Indigenous Peoples across Latin America. Four of them highlight the impacts of externally imposed projects that violate their rights and Indigenous Peoples' resistance. The fifth presents an alternative pathway in which they play a central role in developing renewable energy projects in line with their own priorities and decision-making processes.

1. AYOREO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN ISOLATION

PROJECT | **VALQUIRIA EXPLORATION S.A**

LOCATION | **PARAGUAY**

SECTOR | **MINERALS (LITHIUM)**

Valquiria Exploration S.A is a Paraguayan-registered company that holds lithium mining concessions in the dry forests of the Gran Chaco in the departments of Boquerón and Alto Paraguay, which is home to the Ayoreo Totobiegosode Indigenous People, including groups in voluntary isolation. Lithium exploration in this region aligns with the Paraguay government's push to become a key player in South America's 'lithium triangle,' alongside Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina.²⁵





Paraguay's 1992 Constitution (Chapter V) explicitly recognizes the right of Indigenous Peoples to their identity, customary governance, and communal ownership of their lands, as well as the right to participate in the country's economic, social, political, and cultural life.²⁶ Furthermore, the Statute of Indigenous Communities (Law 904/81) regulates and establishes mechanisms for titling Indigenous Peoples' lands.²⁷ Paraguay has ratified ILO Convention 169.²⁸ In 2018, a Protocol for the Consultation and Free, Prior and Informed Consent with the Indigenous Peoples of Paraguay was adopted by Decree 1039/18, establishing binding requirements for obtaining FPIC.²⁹

Furthermore, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, in several rulings including the *Yakye Axa* (2005), *Sawhoyamaya* (2006), and *Xákmok Kásek* (2010) cases, has pronounced that Paraguay violated the rights of Indigenous Peoples and ordered, inter alia, the restitution of their rights and the adoption of measures to guarantee their survival and cultural integrity.³⁰

In the specific case of the Ayoreo people, some communities hold collective land titles under Law 904/81, and the state also created the *Patrimonio Natural y Cultural Ayoreo Totobiegosode* (PNCAT) in 2001 as a protected area to safeguard the Ayoreo in isolation. Yet many Ayoreo remain outside these titled areas and the PNCAT. In 2016, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights adopted precautionary measures requesting the government of Paraguay to undertake safeguards to protect the Ayoreo Totobiegosode who are in isolation and to prevent unwanted contact and the entry of third parties into their traditional lands.³¹

Nonetheless, despite these laws and measures, several mining concessions of Valquiria Exploration S.A directly intersect with territories that are titled to or are claimed by Indigenous Peoples, especially the Ayoreo people.³² Environmental permits for prospecting and exploration of the "Teniente Martínez" block were announced in 2023 by the Vice Ministry of Mines and Energy, which reportedly denied that they overlapped with Indigenous Peoples' lands.³³

Impacts on Indigenous Peoples' rights, land, livelihood, and culture

While Valquiria S.A's Teniente Martínez exploration project did not reach the exploitation stage, several rights were violated, both of the Ayoreo who are in contact with the majority non-Indigenous population and those in isolation. States have an obligation to implement the *Precautionary Principle* and the *Principle of No Contact* to protect and respect the self-determination, cultural survival, and right to remain in isolation of Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation. They must therefore refrain from certain actions, even if uncertainty remains, and must effectively prevent third parties from entering their traditional territories.³⁴ In the case of Valquiria S.A, environmental permits for lithium exploration were granted on the basis of the claim that those concessions did not overlap with Indigenous Peoples' lands.³⁵

Despite the precautionary measures issued by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in 2016 to protect the Ayoreo Totobiegosode, the environmental ministry granted the exploration permit, authorizing potential entry into isolated Indigenous Peoples' territory. This violated the Precautionary Principle and the Principle of No Contact, putting the Indigenous Peoples' self-determination and cultural survival at risk.



FPIC and community engagement

By choosing to remain in isolation, the isolated Ayoreo have already withheld their consent; thus, their right to self-determination was undermined by the authorization of exploration activities. In the case of Ayoreo communities in contact, several obligations were breached.³⁶ First, the *duty to consult* Indigenous Peoples was violated because the government never consulted them prior to the adoption and implementation of measures that could affect their rights, particularly prior to granting any concessions or licenses.

Secondly, the obligation to conduct environmental and human rights impact assessments, in cooperation with Indigenous Peoples, taking into account cumulative impacts, was not met. The environmental impact assessment (EIA), which was the basis for Valquiria S.A's exploration permit for the Teniente Martínez block, concluded there were no impacts on Indigenous Peoples.³⁷ The absence of any consultation and participatory environmental and social impact study contravened the right of Indigenous Peoples to FPIC.

Community responses: legal action and advocacy

The granting of exploration licenses to Valquiria S.A occurs in a context where Indigenous Peoples in the region are threatened by multiple cumulative impacts and fragmentation of their territory due to illegal invasions, agribusiness, cattle ranching, road development, deforestation, and mining exploration.³⁸

In 2013, the Indigenous organization Organización Payipie Ichadie Totobiegosode (OPIT) requested that the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights adopt precautionary measures to ensure that the Paraguayan government would protect the Ayoreo Totobiegosode people, especially those in isolation.³⁹ In 2016, the Commission issued measures calling on the Paraguayan government to prevent deforestation and establish a mechanism to restrict the entry of third parties into their territories, both recognized and those pending recognition.⁴⁰ In the same year, the Ayoreo also began negotiating with the government to obtain land titles but withdrew, citing a lack of progress.⁴¹

After permits were granted for the Teniente Martínez block, the Ayoreo's allies and investigative news organizations publicly disclosed the project's overlap with the Ayoreo territories, including those of Ayoreo in isolation. This prompted the Ministry of Environment to initiate a revision of permits affecting Indigenous Peoples' territories.⁴² In 2024, it confirmed the overlap and ordered Valquiria S.A to implement a closure plan for the Teniente Martínez concession affecting Indigenous Peoples, citing the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights' precautionary measures.⁴³

Gender dimensions and IPHRDs

No allegations of violations against Indigenous women and Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Defenders were identified, given that the Valquiria project was still in the prospecting phase. However, it is important to consider the context of the Ayoreo people and the cumulative impacts they face due to increased encroachment and



fragmentation of their territories. Those cumulative impacts were not considered in the environmental impact study.⁴⁴

In relation to Indigenous Peoples in isolation, the International Working Group on Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation and Initial Contact states that any “unauthorized entry, forced contact attempt, extractive activity, or presence of external evidence in their territories must be understood as a form of violence and an attack.” Therefore, although no specific public records of attacks against IPHRDs have been found, the very permission to carry out exploration, prospecting, or other extractive activities within or near territories inhabited by Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation constitutes an attack against them.⁴⁵

Good practices and lessons learned

While Paraguay has a decree establishing a binding FPIC protocol, it was not adhered to in this case, demonstrating the limitations of legal frameworks that might be bypassed or not implemented. What ultimately worked was the years of advocacy by the Ayoreo, including before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, resulting in the precautionary measures in 2016.

The government also finally ordered a closure plan when the exploration permit's overlap with Indigenous Peoples' territories protected by the precautionary measures became public. The news reports made it difficult for the government to deny it, underlining the importance of public access to information regarding Indigenous Peoples' territories and any overlap with potential mining concessions in the initial stages of any proposal or impact study.

Lastly, while the Ministry of Environment ordered a closure plan for the Teniente Martínez, Valquiria S.A., other companies, such as the Canadian company Chaco Minerals, maintain active concessions that directly intersect with or are close to Indigenous Peoples' territories. Given that several active mining concessions also overlap with or are proximate to identified records of Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation in various parts of the Gran Chaco region, a precautionary approach must be adopted, even in the absence of clear evidence of their presence. To guarantee their life, integrity, and survival, the possible presence of Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation should entail an obligation to adopt No-Go Zones for extractive industries, unless clearly proven otherwise through independent review involving relevant Indigenous Peoples' organizations and institutions and experts. Critically, the burden of proof must be on relevant government entities, not on Indigenous Peoples and civil society.

Conclusion

The Valquiria case illustrates how the rights of Indigenous Peoples, particularly Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation, are being affected by the energy transition. This commercial interest is undermining international human rights obligations, including those to protect Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation. Rather than advancing a just transition, the expansion of mining for transition minerals is contravening the rights of Indigenous Peoples. This case also underscores the



need for strict implementation of the precautionary principle and the principle of no contact by establishing No-Go Zones that prohibit mining operations that may affect Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation.

2. XI RONDA SURORIENTE, ECUADOR

NAME OF PROJECT | **RONDA SURORIENTE**

LOCATION | **ECUADOR**

SECTOR | **OIL**

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AFFECTED | **KICHWA, WAORANI, SAPARA, SHIWIAR, ACHUAR, ANDWA, SHUAR**

Between 2010 and 2012, the Ecuadorian government announced the XI Ronda Suroriente (oil licensing round), which included several oil blocks in the Pastaza and Morona Santiago Provinces that overlap with the territories of seven Indigenous Nations, including the Kichwa, Sápara, Shiwiar, Achuar, Shuar, and Waorani.⁴⁶ Although all affected Indigenous Peoples have rejected this oil round, the government claims that ‘prior consultations’ took place in 2012 and is currently in the process of bidding with companies.⁴⁷ While the government thus far has been unsuccessful in advancing its exploitation plans, the oil round has already caused profound social impacts, including attacks on Indigenous Peoples human rights and environmental defenders.



Kichwa and Waorani peoples organizing the defense of their territories |
PHOTO CREDIT: Pastaza Kikin Kichwa Runakuna and Organizacion Waorani de Pastaza



The Ecuadorian Constitution of 2008 enshrines several rights of Indigenous Peoples and corresponding state obligations that are recognized and conform to human rights agreements, conventions, declarations, and other international instruments. These include Indigenous Peoples' inalienable right to their community lands, which are immune from seizure and indivisible (Article 57 (4)); the right to prior informed consultation regarding plans and programs affecting their lands and resources (Article 57 (7)); and the right to be consulted before the adoption of any legislative measure that might affect any of their collective rights (Article 57 (17)). In addition, the Constitutional Court has, through various rulings, developed a body of jurisprudence clarifying constitutional obligations related to Free, Prior and Informed Consent. In 2012, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ruled in the case of *Sarayaku vs Ecuador* that Ecuador had violated the rights of the Kichwa People of Sarayaku and further clarified obligations related to the process of prior consultation with Indigenous Peoples.

Despite those obligations, the government adopted Executive Decree 1247 in 2012 to regulate the consultation process with Indigenous Peoples regarding the tendering of oil blocks. But the decree was adopted without the pre-legislative consultation with Indigenous Peoples that the Constitution established as an obligation. The Decree defines consultation as a mere information-sharing process on decisions already taken, rather than a mechanism to safeguard Indigenous Peoples' substantive rights to their lands, territories and resources, and to self-determination.⁴⁸ In December 2023, the Constitutional Court ruled that Ecuador had failed to comply with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights' judgment in the case of *Sarayaku vs Ecuador* and, *inter alia*, ordered a review and update of Decree No. 1247 because it was developed without Indigenous Peoples' participation. Despite those legal protections and resistance by Indigenous Peoples, the government's plans to expand oil extraction continue.

Impacts on Indigenous Peoples' rights, land, livelihood, and culture

While the Ronda Suroriente was announced in 2010 and officially launched in 2012, attempts by the state and various companies to establish operations have taken place since the late 1980s.⁴⁹

Impacts have accumulated not only through the Ronda Suroriente but also through a series of attempts by successive governments to extract oil in the region, despite Indigenous Peoples' opposition. Although it has yet to result in oil exploitation, its impacts are profound and have been affirmed by court rulings. For example, in the case of *Sarayaku vs Ecuador*, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ruled in 2012 that the state had violated the Kichwa People of Sarayaku's right to cultural identity and communal property and had put their lives and personal integrity at risk by allowing oil exploration activities, alongside repression by military and private security.

When the Ronda Suroriente was launched, the affected Indigenous Peoples were already strongly opposing the oil extraction expansion, as most of their territories overlap, largely or entirely, with the oil blocks. The Ecuadorian government accordingly adopted a manipulative consultation process through Decree No. 1247.

It signed agreements with various actors, such as parish councils, without respecting Indigenous Peoples' own decision-making institutions, seeding intra-community conflict and violating the right to autonomy and self-government.⁵⁰

In the case of the Sápara Nation's territory, the government modified the land title, such that 70% was awarded to a pro-oil organization created in 2019, which does not represent the Sápara Nation, violating their territorial rights.⁵¹ This illustrates how extractive policies in Ecuador have been accompanied by attempts of companies and governments to weaken Indigenous Peoples' territorial rights to advance extractive projects.

FPIC and community engagement

After announcing the oil round, the government began purported 'consultations' in 2012, which, according to the then Minister of Hydrocarbons, were non-binding and would have allowed communities to know if they would be affected.⁵² Thus, from the outset, the consultations denied the Indigenous Peoples the opportunity to influence the outcome, violating the state's obligation to consult and *cooperate* with Indigenous Peoples in *good faith* to obtain their FPIC, as enshrined in Article 32 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

While the government states that it had conducted consultations with 'massive citizen participation', investigations show that these did not conform to the Ecuadorian Constitution or international human rights law, as they entailed manipulation. Furthermore, while the 'consultations' took place in 2012, the plans had already been announced in 2010, thus failing to comply with the principle of *prior* consultation and consent.⁵³ In 2019, the Provincial Court of Pastaza ruled that the 2012 consultations were null because they were implemented in bad faith.⁵⁴

Despite the clear, continuous opposition from Indigenous Peoples, successive governments have sought to advance the Ronda Suroriente by tendering contracts to oil companies. In 2024, the government announced plans to attract USD \$20 billion in private investments in the Ronda Suroriente to extract 30,000 barrels of oil per day.⁵⁵ While Indigenous Peoples have clearly rejected those plans, the government has sought to justify them, arguing that consultations already took place in 2012.⁵⁶ In September 2025, the 7 Indigenous Nations of the Pastaza province once again publicly proclaimed they reject the Ronda Suroriente and have not given their consent to it.⁵⁷

We alert that the Ecuadorian government is offering our territories for oil exploration and exploitation, as if they were empty spaces, appropriable like any object, or sacrifice zones, without respecting our right to consultation and consent.⁵⁸

STATEMENT OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE ECUADORIAN AMAZON





Community Responses: legal action and advocacy

Given the large territorial extent of the Ronda Suroriente, the number of Indigenous Peoples and communities involved, and the long period involved, it is impossible to list all responses, actions, and strategies in this report. The following instead highlights a few significant actions and initiatives taken by Indigenous Peoples.

In response to the launch of the government-led ‘consultation’ process through Decree 1247, the national and regional Indigenous Peoples’ organizations - the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) and the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon (CONFENIAE) - along with Comité Interfederacional, a committee established by various Indigenous nations to defend their territories, gathered in an assembly to adopt a joint position.⁵⁹ In October 2012, the member organizations of CONAIE and CONFENIAE explicitly rejected the Ronda Suroriente and the illegitimate consultation process. This was followed by a number of assemblies, resolutions, and marches against the Ronda Suroriente by various Indigenous Nations.⁶⁰

Faced with a new round of ‘consultations’ in March 2015, the Comité Interfederacional assembled in an extraordinary gathering where they resolved to reject all government policies on oil and mining as well as the new ‘consultation’ and to prohibit the entry of staff carrying out consultation processes into their territories.⁶¹ In August of the same year, CONAIE started a national strike against the Ronda Suroriente.⁶²

With new announcements to activate tendering for the Ronda Suroriente in 2024 and 2025, adoption of a series of regressive laws and executive decrees, and elimination of diesel subsidies, Indigenous Peoples’ organizations once again staged protests lasting nearly one month.⁶³

Gender dimensions and IPHRDs

Since its inception, the Ronda Suroriente has resulted in a series of attacks against Indigenous Peoples human rights defenders, particularly affecting Indigenous women. In 2013, a 13-year-old teenager belonging to the Sápara Nation was assassinated a week after the Sápara people received threats for opposing oil extraction.⁶⁴ Between 2016 and 2018, various Indigenous women, including Patricia Gualinga,⁶⁵ Nema Grefa,⁶⁶ Salomé Aranda,⁶⁷ and Gloria Ushigua⁶⁸, received death threats amidst their opposition to oil blocks linked to the Ronda Suroriente.

After being re-elected in 2025, the government of Daniel Noboa adopted a series of Decrees that roll back human rights and environmental protections,⁶⁹ including reforms that enable the persecution of dissenting movements, among them Indigenous Peoples’ organizations.⁷⁰ After CONAIE declared a national strike in response to several regressive political and legislative reforms, the government used those very same laws to freeze bank accounts of social movement leaders without due process, including current and former representatives of Indigenous Peoples’ organizations.⁷¹ Those actions have been denounced by Indigenous Peoples’ organizations as a government strategy to silence opposition to its oil projects.



Good practices and lessons learned

This case highlights the complex dynamics of resistance against extractive projects, which span prolonged periods and affect Indigenous Peoples in multiple ways. The political organization and mobilizations have thus far succeeded in resisting projects, in line with the Indigenous Peoples' right to withhold consent. Nonetheless, the government's efforts to dismantle environmental and social protections and to weaken Indigenous Peoples' organizations by freezing their bank accounts show that attacks are targeted not only against individuals leading opposition against such projects. Wider legislative reforms also aim to suppress opposition and, more broadly, the Indigenous Peoples movement in Ecuador to pave the way for extractive activities.⁷²

Conclusion

The case demonstrates decades of Indigenous Peoples' resistance to oil extraction and the State's inappropriate legal measures to comply with its obligations on consultation and FPIC. The Indigenous Peoples refused to be consulted and prohibited the consultation staff from entering. By this rejection, they have already exercised their right to withhold consent. However, the government's attempts to use a purported consultation in 2012 show how it instead employs consultation-related language to legitimize projects that Indigenous Peoples have already said no to.

Furthermore, it illustrates how legal reforms and executive decrees are utilized to 'pave the way' for extractive projects. This underscores that the principle of non-regression of human rights must be promoted and upheld for the energy transition to be just.

3. ANTU I, INDIGENOUS-LED RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECT

NAME OF PROJECT | **ANTU I SOLAR PARK**

LOCATION | **ARGENTINA**

SECTOR | **RENEWABLE ENERGY (SOLAR)**

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AFFECTED | **MAPUCHE**

Over the past years, Argentina has expanded exploration and extraction of energy transition minerals, particularly lithium. While this sector is promoted as part of the energy transition, it has systematically been implemented at the expense of Indigenous Peoples' rights. Despite constitutional recognition of Indigenous Peoples' collective rights, ratification of ILO Convention 169, and adoption of UNDRIP, Argentina lacks laws and regulations to implement those rights, including to FPIC, resulting in systemic rights violations.⁷³

Unlike the other cases, the 18 MW ANTU I Solar Park project is not an externally imposed extractive or energy project. It is an Indigenous-led renewable energy model that is developed in line with Indigenous Peoples' own priorities, providing an alternative pathway for a rights-respecting energy transition.



The Solar Park project is developed by Indigenous Peoples through partnership and co-design aligned with their own objectives and decision-making processes. The partnership is between the Indigenous Mapuche Miillaqueo community, Meliquina Partners, and Sustentar Energía SRL. It is being implemented through a special-purpose vehicle (SPV), “CLA NEHUEN ANTU S.A.,” in which the Mapuche Millaqueo are co-owners. The SPV holds land-use authorizations for the project, while the Mapuche Millaqueo are the owners of the land.⁷⁴

The project has reached agreements on land use, feasibility, and environmental studies and obtained an environmental license in March 2025. A key step in developing it was to secure collective property titles in its initial phases. In 2018, as part of the initial agreements with Meliquina Partners and the Mapuche Millaqueo, and as part of the project's pre-design, a process was initiated to secure communal property title, which was acquired in 2022. Between 2023 and 2024, the Mapuche Millaqueo community amended its internal statutes to permit the community to participate as a shareholder of the CLA NEHUEN ANTU special purpose vehicle; during this period, technical and environmental impact studies were also completed.⁷⁵

It has been projected that agreements with investors would be reached between 2025 and 2026, and that a fiduciary fund for the community would be developed. Construction is planned for 2026-2027 and operations in 2027.⁷⁶

Impacts on Indigenous Peoples' rights, land, livelihood, and culture

Argentina's Constitution recognizes Indigenous Peoples' possession and communal ownership of their traditionally occupied lands, but subsequent legislation and implementation of those rights have remained incomplete, resulting in only a minority of Indigenous Peoples' communities having received registered titles of



community property.⁷⁷ This was true of the Mapuche Millaqueo community before the ANTU 1 project commenced.

During the project's development, the community sought formal recognition of a communal property title over 9,500 hectares⁷⁸ to be able to participate as owners of the land and secure necessary permits and approvals for the project. The ANTU 1 project can thus be seen as a catalyst for the formal titling of the Mapuche Millaqueo land. However, it should also be noted that the land titling process was not only instrumental to the ANTU 1 project but also part of the community's broader strategy to strengthen its territorial governance and self-determination.⁷⁹ Also notable is that participation in the special purpose vehicle did not entail a cessation or limitation of their territorial rights; rather, it served as a legal instrument to protect the community's interests.⁸⁰

The solar project is located within a 42.5-hectare polygon. While it has yet to enter the construction phase and have any significant impacts on the territory, the Environmental Impact Assessment has identified several environmental, social, and cultural impacts. These include minor impacts on grazing areas, creation of local employment during construction, and projected future financial revenue streams.⁸¹

FPIC and community engagement

The ANTU 1 case presents a significant example of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent being implemented in keeping with the community's self-determined priorities. Rather than a company seeking to gain acceptance or consent for a project in exchange for benefits, the Mapuche Millaqueo community, Meliquina Partners, and Sustentar Energía SRL have developed the project together from scratch, with the community participating at every stage.⁸² While Argentina has no national regulation requiring FPIC, the project can be seen as reflecting the exercise of this Indigenous Peoples' right through their own internal decision-making processes.⁸³ In the case of ANTU 1, FPIC was not a matter of external validation but an expression of the right to decide on their own development priorities through their own governance structures.

Community responses: legal action and advocacy

In contrast to many cases in Latin America marked by protests and litigation, the Mapuche Millaqueo community has taken proactive steps to shape the ANTU 1 Solar Park in line with their self-determined priorities. These include capacity-building,⁸⁴ titling of communal property, participation in environmental hearings, and the creation of an SPV, which allowed them to participate as the landowners, granting land use permits to the SPV.

The community has held several capacity-building sessions, including on financial education, health, safety, and environment (SHE), and photovoltaic electricity generation. According to Stella Maris Zapata, President of CLA Nehuen Antu and a member of the Millaqueo community, a key to the project's success has been having clear governance and decision-making structures and roles within the community.⁸⁵

*We really generated profound changes in the community, empowering the communities, and especially empowering the women. They are thinking about their children, their nieces, the territory, and the animals, so they have a level of involvement that is powerful.*⁸⁶

STELLA MARIS ZAPATA, PRESIDENT OF CLA NEHUEN ANTU S.A
AND MEMBER OF THE MAPUCHE MILLAQUEO COMMUNITY

Gender dimensions and IPHRDs

Unlike many cases where Indigenous Peoples opposing externally defined projects face threats, intimidation, and reprisals, no such instances have been documented for the ANTU 1 project. This is largely because the Millaqueo community is central to the project design and implementation, and it conforms with their own internal decision-making processes. In addition, the project has contributed to the empowerment and leadership of the women, including through increased agency and participation in community decision-making and through capacity-building and positioning women as central to the energy transition.⁸⁷

Good practices and lessons learned

The ANTU 1 Solar Park demonstrates a model of proactive leadership and participation of Indigenous Peoples at all stages of a project. Instead of a mandated consultation process that attempts to persuade community members to support a project, the community itself decided to co-develop the project with its partners.

Furthermore, it illustrates how the legal recognition of Indigenous Peoples' territorial rights, through demarcation or titling of communal property, is a prerequisite for the just transition, not only as a means of protecting rights but also as an enabler of renewable energy projects led by Indigenous Peoples.

The case also shows the importance of genuine partnerships, implemented in good faith, that respect Indigenous Peoples' decisions and consent at all stages. This not only empowers communities to determine and pursue their own priorities but also enhances project legitimacy and reduces conflict. In particular, it underscores that Free, Prior, and Informed Consent is not merely a matter of compliance with regulatory frameworks or a one-time occurrence. It is a continuous process of negotiation, participation in decision-making, and respect for Indigenous Peoples' decisions.

Conclusion

The ANTU 1 Solar Park showcases how the energy transition can be built in support of Indigenous Peoples' rights and priorities, with Indigenous Peoples as key partners based on their FPIC. It offers an alternative to the current status quo model, in which top-down, predetermined, or predesigned projects undergo consultation with Indigenous Peoples AIMED to secure their acceptance, which may lead to opposition and conflict. While its final outcomes are yet to be seen, it shows a replicable model, if and where such projects are aligned with Indigenous Peoples' visions and social, economic, and environmental priorities.



4. SALINAS GRANDE, ARGENTINA

NAME OF PROJECT | **SALINAS GRANDES-LAGUNA DE GUAYATAYOC LITHIUM BASIN EXPLORATION**

LOCATION | **JUJUY, ARGENTINA**

SECTOR | **MINERALS (LITHIUM)**

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AFFECTED | **KOLLA AND ATACAMA**

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES OF THE SALINAS GRANDES AND LAGUNA DE GUATAYOC BASIN

The Salinas Grandes and Laguna de Guayatayoc Basin is located in Jujuy Province on the Andean Plateau of northern Argentina. The region contains salt flats, grazing lands, and wetlands and is home to 33 communities belonging to the **Kolla and Atacama Indigenous Peoples**, whose identities and ways of life are intrinsically connected to their territories and for whom salt flats are sacred.⁸⁸

Located in the 'lithium triangle,' the Indigenous Peoples' communities in this region have experienced a rush of investment in lithium mining over the past decade. Companies that have received exploration concessions include Lition Energy and its parent company, Pan American Energy (PAE), Litica Resources, and JEMSE S.A.⁸⁹

While Argentina's Constitution recognizes certain rights of Indigenous Peoples, it lacks a comprehensive national framework to protect the right of Indigenous Peoples to FPIC. The Constitution of Jujuy similarly lacks FPIC protections, and, in practice, provincial authorities have treated Indigenous Peoples' territories largely as public lands.⁹⁰ Regarding mining, they have regulatory authority over natural resources.

Impacts on Indigenous Peoples' rights, land, livelihood, and culture

Despite the country's constitutional recognition of Indigenous Peoples' right to possession and communal ownership of their traditionally occupied lands and its ratification of ILO Convention 169, most communities in the Salinas Grandes and Laguna de Guayatayoc Basin have yet to secure a communal property title. This has enabled companies to operate as if it were empty land, and environmental impact assessments have reportedly not even acknowledged their existence.⁹¹

While mining projects in this area are still in exploration and feasibility stages, they have already caused significant impacts to Indigenous Peoples' lives and rights. Sensitive ecosystems, already affected by climate change that is drying up springs, wetlands, and pasture zones, are facing additional impacts from the water use associated with exploration activities. Against this backdrop, representatives of Indigenous Peoples' communities have declared that the extraction of minerals would devastate not just water but also their lives and cultural survival.⁹²

There are a lot of things we will lose due to the extraction of water, so what will happen to us? What will the role of our communities be? It will be either our extermination or disappearing from the territories, because there will be no water.

CLEMENTE FLORES, PRESIDENT OF THE EL ANGOSTO INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY IN SALINAS GRANDES

FPIC and community engagement

In response to the threats of mining companies seeking to operate without respect for FPIC, the communities in the region created the *Mesa de Pueblos Originarios de la Cuenca de Salinas Grandes y Laguna de Guayatayoc*. This is a Council established to defend their territories, and in 2015, it adopted the *Kachi Yupi* Free, Prior, and Informed Consent Protocol. The protocol establishes that any proposal to initiate a consultation must coordinate with the General Assembly of the Cuenca de Salinas Grandes y Laguna Guayatayoc and sets out the criteria for consultation and consent.⁹³

But instead of adhering to this protocol, companies have approached communities individually,⁹⁴ thus violating the right of Indigenous Peoples to autonomy and internal decision-making processes.

Community responses: legal action and advocacy

In addition to establishing the Council and the Protocol, the communities have undertaken a series of actions and strategies. They have produced a documentary, *In the Name of Lithium*, as well as the podcast *Habla Pacha*, to document and spread awareness of their situation.⁹⁵

They have taken legal action at the national and international levels. After domestic legal avenues stalled, they filed a petition with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in 2013, which the Court finally admitted in 2023 and is now being processed.⁹⁶



In 2019, they filed a lawsuit against the provincial governments of Salta and Jujuy, as well as the National State, over the lack of adequate baseline studies to assess the cumulative impacts of water use. They further asked the court to halt any new mining activity until adequate studies are implemented and access to information is guaranteed.⁹⁷ In 2025, the Supreme Court finally ruled that impacts to the Salinas Grandes and Guayatayoc cannot be treated as isolated projects, but rather require a single evaluation of cumulative impacts.⁹⁸

The communities have also used the Human Rights Council as an avenue for advocacy, denouncing legal reforms that promote lithium extraction without FPIC.⁹⁹

Gender dimensions and IPHRD

Indigenous women affected by mining in the Jujuy region, which includes the Salinas Grandes-Guayatayoc basin, have faced reprisals for opposing mining projects and regulatory reforms promoting lithium mining. In June 2023, protests against constitutional reforms resulted in repression, including excessive use of force, death threats, and sexual assault and police abuse against women.¹⁰⁰

Good practices and lessons learned

Several good practices were adopted by Indigenous Peoples in order to exercise their rights. First, the cross-community Council and FPIC protocol they developed have proven to be important tools in asserting their right of self-determination.

In the absence of land titling, the FPIC protocol also sets out a territorial map of the Salinas Grandes-Guayatayoc, enabling communities to define their own territorial boundaries and providing an important foundation for demanding respect for their lands and territories. On the other hand, the lack of communal land titles for the communities has enabled environmental impact assessments to ignore the existence of Indigenous Peoples. This underscores the importance of land titling as a foundational element of the just transition.

Secondly, while the communities have adopted legal advocacy strategies, with favorable decisions by the Supreme Court of Argentina in 2025, this case highlights that legal avenues are lengthy and insufficient on their own to guarantee respect for Indigenous Peoples' rights and access to justice. This emphasizes the need for various strategies to assert Indigenous Peoples' rights in the energy transition, including combining legal advocacy with the strengthening of governance structures, FPIC protocols, and other forms of advocacy such as documentaries and podcasts.

Thirdly, the case illustrates how impacts on Indigenous Peoples are not confined to individual projects but rather entail cumulative effects of various projects, as affirmed by the Supreme Court, alongside ongoing impacts from climate change. It also shows the consequences of regressive regulatory reforms that seek to fast-track mining, including through retaliation against protesters.



Conclusion

The Salinas Grandes-Guayatayoc case reveals how mining for transition minerals, in the name of the energy transition, is being implemented in a deeply unjust manner, further exacerbating climate change impacts and endangering the ways of life and cultural survival of Indigenous Peoples.

This is a clear example that the energy transition cannot be just if it fails to fully protect and respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples. This is not limited to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent but also legal recognition and protection of their right to their lands and territories, as well as to enforcing and complying with Indigenous Peoples' FPIC protocols.

5. YUCATAN SOLAR PV PARK, MEXICO

NAME OF PROJECT | **YUCATAN SOLAR PV PARK**

LOCATION | **STATE OF YUCATÁN, MEXICO**

SECTOR | **RENEWABLE ENERGY (SOLAR)**

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AFFECTED | **MAYA COMMUNITIES**

Over the past decade, Mexico has expanded large-scale renewable energy generation, including through constitutional and legislative reforms related to its 2013-2015 renewable energy commitments. Those reforms set targets to increase the share of renewable energy in electricity generation and opened the energy sector to private foreign investment.¹⁰¹ While such reforms and expansion have been promoted as contributing to climate change mitigation, they have resulted in many cases of human rights abuses.¹⁰²





Mexico's Constitution recognizes Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination and autonomy and to be consulted in relation to administrative and legislative matters that may affect them, with a view to obtaining their consent.¹⁰³ Mexico has ratified ILO Convention 169 and was a key player in the adoption of UNDRIP.¹⁰⁴

In the energy sector, those obligations were partially reflected in the Ley de la Industria Eléctrica, which establishes a procedural obligation to consult, and in the Reglamento de la Ley de la Industria Eléctrica. These regulations set out administrative provisions designating the Secretariat of Energy (Sener) as responsible for consultations and the procedural phases of the consultation process and require project developers to submit a Social Impact Assessment (SIA). However, projects in terms of this regulatory framework have frequently resulted in violations of Indigenous Peoples' right to FPIC.¹⁰⁵

It is also within this legal framework that Lightning PV Park, a subsidiary of the Chinese company Jinko Solar, secured a contract to develop the 70-MW Yucatán Solar PV Park in Valladolid, Yucatán. Valladolid is an area inhabited by Maya communities and used for various traditional and cultural practices, such as *milpa* agriculture. The project raised concerns regarding large-scale land-use change in Maya traditional areas, as well as inadequate procedures regarding project approval, including impact assessments and consultation processes. Ultimately, this led to community resistance and the project's suspension in 2019.¹⁰⁶

Impacts on Indigenous Peoples' rights, land, livelihood, and culture

Compared to many projects that affect Indigenous Peoples with collective land tenure systems, the Yucatán Solar PV Park project was set up mostly on privately held lands within Indigenous Peoples' territory. The project encompassed a 255-hectare footprint, including the clearing of over 200 hectares of forest. While Maya communities in Mexico are typically organized as *ejidos*, meaning areas of communal land use, the Yucatan Solar PV Park project was undertaken on lands owned by several landowners within Indigenous Peoples' territory.¹⁰⁷

But regardless of privately held land titles, the land was collectively used and held cultural and spiritual importance for the broader community because of the presence of a sacred *cenote*.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, the impacts cannot be understood solely through the lens of formal, individual property ownership, but rather through the lens of Indigenous Peoples' collective rights to lands and territories. These collective rights are recognized by international human rights law based on traditional occupation and use, not on formal title.¹⁰⁹

The project's clearing of over 200 hectares of forest displaced animals that once lived on the land, disrupted climate regulation, reduced rainfall, led to higher temperatures, and affected beekeeping,¹¹⁰ among other things. The project thus caused significant impacts on Indigenous Peoples' rights to their lands and territories, as well as on their cultural practices and livelihoods.



FPIC and community engagement

While Mexican law requires a social impact assessment and a state-led consultation process aimed at obtaining the consent of affected Indigenous Peoples, the consultation for this project only occurred after key decisions had been made and permits had been granted.¹¹¹ It thus violated the right of Indigenous Peoples to *prior* consultation and consent. Furthermore, the scope of communities to be consulted was determined by the Social Impact Assessment, which identified the two communities of Cuncunul and Ebtún as part of the indirect area of influence, but it excluded Dzitnup, another community in proximity to the project area.¹¹²

While the project had been authorized in March 2017,¹¹³ it was only in September 2017 that the Secretariat of Energy published a protocol for consultation with the community of Cuncunul,¹¹⁴ and a separate protocol for the community of Ebtún.¹¹⁵ Those protocols established, *inter alia*, that the Sener is the responsible state authority for the consultation and that the consultation process has five phases: preliminary agreements, information sharing, deliberation, consultation, and implementation and monitoring.

Initial meetings, workshops, and information-sharing sessions led by the Secretariat of Energy took place with the communities between June and October 2017.¹¹⁶ But according to community members, those were unilateral presentations, lacked accurate information, and excluded dissenting views. Concerns about the consultation process, along with the impacts, ultimately led to mobilization against the proposed project.¹¹⁷

Community responses: legal action and advocacy

Community responses to the Yucatán Solar PV Park evolved progressively across multiple fronts as the project advanced and community members became increasingly aware of its impacts and procedural inadequacies. In 2016, *Articulación Yucatán*, a citizen-led collective, submitted a request for information regarding the Social Impact Assessment, which was denied on the grounds of purported confidentiality.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, because both the EIA and SIA omitted significant impacts important to the Maya communities, they also submitted various forms of evidence and testimony regarding these impacts.¹¹⁹

A key actor in the community mobilization was the Asamblea Múuch' Xíinbal, an assembly bringing together approximately 25 Maya communities. The assembly served as a space for information-sharing, analysis, collective decision-making, and resistance to 'green grabbing.' This resistance was not just against Yucatán Solar PV Park, but also against a wave of six solar parks and nine wind energy parks authorized on the Yucatán Peninsula. According to the Asamblea Múuch' Xíinbal, during visits to the different communities affected by those projects, they discovered a "network of lies" used by the proponents to convince community members, many of whom signed agreements without knowing how to read, write, or understand the legal terms.¹²⁰

Mobilization against the Yucatán Solar PV Park escalated into legal action in February 2019 when members of the Asamblea Múuch' Xíinbal filed an "amparo" (injunction) against the project due to failure to respect the right to prior consultation as required under Mexican law.¹²¹ This ultimately led to the suspension of the project in April 2019.¹²²

Renewable energy is an alternative, but not under the model they propose. If they did indeed have concern for the people, a responsible government would favour community organisation processes so that they develop cooperatives that produce and sell their own energy¹²³

CANDELARIA MAY, ASSEMBLY OF DEFENDERS OF THE MÚUCH 'XÍINBAL TERRITORY

Gender dimensions and IPHRD

Opposition to the Yucatán Solar PV Park resulted in several cases of reported intimidation, harassment, and threats to community members. Community members have reported receiving direct threats via telephone calls, messages through social media,¹²⁴ and intimidation through visits to defenders' homes and workplaces.¹²⁵

Good practices and lessons learned

The Yucatán Solar PV Park highlights both strengths and weaknesses in Mexico's legal framework for Indigenous Peoples' rights. On the one hand, constitutional recognition of the right to consultation allows Indigenous Peoples to challenge projects that violate this right and enabled Maya communities to obtain a suspension of the Yucatán Solar PV Park.

Yet it also reveals weaknesses in the implementation of this right. In the case of the Yucatán Solar PV Park, it was regulated through administrative acts that focused on procedural matters rather than safeguarding and upholding substantive rights of Indigenous Peoples. As a result, the consultation process was implemented as a compliance mechanism to legitimize a project after key decisions had already been made and the project had obtained permits.

Also, the Secretariat of Energy simultaneously served as the authority promoting the project and as the one regulating the consultation process, giving rise to a conflict of interest. The case thus highlights that projects promoted by the same external actors that carry out or regulate consultations compromise the good-faith conduct in those consultations. It leads to a situation where consultations are sought to convince community members to support projects rather than to ensure fully informed participation in decision-making.

The case also demonstrates how collective mobilization, through a united front of multiple Indigenous Peoples' communities, can strengthen their advocacy to defend their rights against externally imposed projects that disregard their rights. Finally, it points to an important lesson for the energy transition: instead of prioritizing the pursuit of consent for externally defined projects, policies should support projects driven and led by Indigenous Peoples and their communities, in accordance with their self-determined priorities.



Conclusion

The Yucatán Solar PV Park case demonstrates that energy transition policies that favor top-down models over community-led projects, even if consultation is mandated by regulation, risk using the consultation processes and other procedural safeguards like impact assessments to legitimize projects instead of protecting substantive rights.

The case also shows that Indigenous Peoples must be included not only in the design and decision-making of individual projects but also in developing plans, policies, and regulations related to the energy transition. This should incorporate Indigenous Peoples not only as subjects of procedural safeguards but also as participants in formulating the policy and legal frameworks that govern the energy transition. Such frameworks should integrate Indigenous Peoples' visions and priorities, like decisions on locations for renewable energy, and support their own initiated projects, as opposed to a narrow focus on consultations for externally defined projects.





III. Analysis

This section examines cross-cutting issues and recurring patterns that emerged across the cases. It outlines broader trends, challenges, and enabling factors and good practices.

TRENDS

Across Latin America, the so-called energy transition is not a transition but rather an energy expansion due to the continued extension of the oil frontier and increase in renewable energy projects and transition mineral mining. Far from being a just transition, it is replicating extractive logics and dynamics of the oil and gas sector.

While Indigenous Peoples' rights to their lands, territories, and Free, Prior, and Informed Consent are, in varying degrees, recognized by multiple international and domestic instruments, they are often poorly implemented. This is shown, for instance, in the Yucatán Solar PV Park case, where consultations were done after key decisions had been made. Legal protection of Indigenous Peoples' right to their lands, territories and resources is also missing in many cases, rendering Indigenous Peoples invisible in project approval processes. In the Salinas Grandes-Laguna de Guayatayoc Basin case, the EIAs did not even acknowledge the presence of Indigenous Peoples.

A common trend is that, in practice, consultation, FPIC, and social and environmental impact studies are proceduralized and frequently implemented merely for compliance rather than to protect Indigenous Peoples' substantive rights. This was demonstrated in Ecuador, where a purported 2012 consultation was used to legitimize oil extraction projects unanimously rejected by the affected Indigenous Peoples. Furthermore, companies and state actors frequently utilize divide-and-conquer or selective negotiation tactics, thus undermining social cohesion and Indigenous Peoples' governance structures.

A worrying trend is the adoption of regulatory reforms that are either regressive and erode environmental and human rights protections or are designed in a top-down manner without the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples. Those reforms seek to attract foreign investment and fast track project approval, while sacrificing Indigenous Peoples and their territories. This has been documented in Ecuador, where the government has promoted several regressive laws, many of which have been suspended for failure to respect the Ecuadorian Constitution.

Another trend is the neglect of cumulative impacts of various activities affecting a certain region, in addition to impacts already taking place, e.g., due to climate change, as evidenced by the lithium exploration projects in Salinas Grandes, Argentina.

In this context, litigation has become an essential tool of Indigenous Peoples at various levels, including in national courts as well as the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. But this growing reliance on litigation also illustrates that national legal frameworks and their implementation are often inadequate. In addition, litigation procedures entail significant burdens on Indigenous Peoples. Even where



Indigenous Peoples are successful in litigation, this may occur only after significant irreversible impacts have already been caused.

CHALLENGES

The key challenges for a just transition for Indigenous Peoples in the region include the lack of effective implementation and enforcement of state obligations to respect and fulfill Indigenous Peoples' rights under international and domestic legal frameworks. Also significant is the frequency and scale of reprisals against Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Defenders, as shown by threats and criminalization of defenders in Ecuador, Mexico, and Argentina.

Among structural constraints are inadequate legal frameworks for the recognition and protection of Indigenous Peoples' territories and right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent and insufficient protections for Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation and Initial Contact.

At the operational and project level, major challenges encompass deceptive and biased consultations and processes, including after permits have already been granted, and lack of cumulative impact assessments. States and companies adopt practices and strategies in bad faith to try to circumvent obligations to fulfill the rights to Free, Prior and Informed Consent, autonomy, and self-determination of Indigenous Peoples.

The prevailing model of energy transition is one that aims to impose externally defined priorities rather than support Indigenous Peoples' own initiatives and goals.

ENABLING FACTORS AND GOOD PRACTICES

Key enabling factors, whether for Indigenous Peoples to defend their rights against unwanted projects or to pursue their own self-determined projects like ANTU 1, consist of the titling of communal property rights to their lands and strengthening of their governance and decision-making institutions, e.g., through the adoption of FPIC protocols.

Externally defined projects that try to buy 'consent' in exchange for benefits are likely to face continued resistance and rejection by Indigenous Peoples. On the other hand, genuine partnerships developed and led by Indigenous Peoples throughout all stages are more likely to be successful, both for Indigenous Peoples and external commercial partners.

The cases also demonstrate that where minimum conditions and actions for good-faith engagement are absent or where Indigenous Peoples lack the ability to withhold consent, projects and consultations should not proceed at all, since this would inherently risk violating their rights. Furthermore, where Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation may be affected, the principles of precaution and no contact require the effective prevention of any third-party entry, including through prohibition measures.



IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

Across Latin America, the narrative of the *just transition* remains unfulfilled for Indigenous Peoples who confront expansion of oil, energy transition mineral projects, and renewable energy projects that violate their rights. In many cases, they also face regressive regulatory reforms.

The case studies show that procedural safeguards are not sufficient if Indigenous Peoples' substantive rights are not guaranteed and if states or project proponents act in bad faith. Furthermore, procedural safeguards such as consultation processes also impose significant burdens on Indigenous Peoples and can lead to internal tensions within communities. For the energy transition to be just, its development pathways must ensure these do not happen.

As such, the energy transition cannot be achieved if current trends continue. Indigenous Peoples must be part of shaping national energy policies rather than mere subjects of safeguards in the accelerated deployment of projects. This includes the establishment of No-Go Zones where such projects should not take place at all.

But Indigenous Peoples are not passive victims. They are mobilizing and advocating through various strategies and actions, such as FPIC protocols and legal action. Notably, Indigenous Peoples' organizations from the Amazon and all biomes of Brazil have shown broad consensus on the need to adopt No-Go Zones for extractive activities affecting their territories, clearly indicating to the world their non-consent to such activities. This includes monoculture plantations for biofuels that some governments are promoting in pursuit of energy transition,¹²⁶

Building on the analysis and conclusions, the following recommendations outline concrete actions for Indigenous Peoples, governments, companies, and funders:

Indigenous Peoples

- ◆ Convene at the local, national, and regional levels to agree on shared priorities in the energy transition, including visions for activities that are prohibited in their respective territories, as well as activities that may be welcome, only if implemented in full partnership with Indigenous Peoples. This may include, e.g. agreements on spatial planning and No-Go Zones, conditions under which engagement with external actors may be considered, and community-led alternatives.
- ◆ Continue advocating for the legal protection of Indigenous Peoples' rights to their lands, territories and resources, through demarcation, delimitation and titling, as applicable.



- ◆ Strengthen internal governance structures, as well as external advocacy capacities, such as legal advocacy and advocacy in international decision-making spaces.
- ◆ Develop alternative solutions, such as community-led renewable energy projects, demonstrate that those are viable and contribute to climate goals and targets, and document and disseminate information regarding community-led solutions and best practices.
- ◆ Advocate for the incorporation of Indigenous Peoples' rights, including to self-determination and Free, Prior, and Informed Consent, and protections for Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation and recent contact in national just transition pathways, including in Nationally Determined Contributions, National Adaptation Plans and Long-Term Low Emissions Development Strategies, supported through binding operational commitments and actions.

Governments

- ◆ Legally recognize and implement Indigenous Peoples' FPIC protocols as binding legal instruments at all stages of regulating activities affecting Indigenous Peoples' territories, such as prospection, exploration, feasibility, environmental and social impact assessments, construction, operation and post-operation.
- ◆ Make legal protection of Indigenous Peoples' rights to their territories, including through titling or demarcation, a mandatory precondition, prior to the approval of projects, and prior to consultation and environmental impact assessment processes.
- ◆ Develop and implement legal frameworks for the adoption of No-Go Zones, with the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples.
- ◆ Uphold the principle of No Contact and the Precautionary Principle for Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation and recent contact, effectively prohibiting and preventing the entry to their territories of any third parties. In order to prevent shirking of responsibilities between different government departments, this must ensure that all environmental approval processes are cross-checked against registries on territories where Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation and initial contact may exist, so that such activities are by default prohibited.
- ◆ Develop and implement regulations to prevent conflicts of interest in project permitting procedures, so that there is a clear separation between government entities that promote projects and those that regulate EIAs, SIAs, and FPIC.
- ◆ Develop and implement regulations to ensure cumulative impact assessments and require that such assessments are developed with the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples, considering their specific rights, needs, and circumstances.
- ◆ Embed Indigenous Peoples' rights and priorities into national just transition pathways, including Nationally Determined Contributions, National Adaptation Plans and Long-Term Low Emissions Development Strategies, ensuring that such plans are developed with the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples in decision-making.



For companies and project developers

- ◆ Where Indigenous Peoples are affected, commit to proceed only where their rights to their lands, territories and resources are adequately secured, and where their Free, Prior, and Informed Consent has been obtained.
- ◆ Commit to treat FPIC as a genuine partnership, at all project stages, rather than as a one-off process. This requires compliance with Indigenous Peoples' internal decisions at all stages.
- ◆ Commit to withdrawing projects if there is lack of consent, even if states or governments have awarded permits or approvals.
- ◆ Develop binding policies to prohibit and prevent activities that may affect Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation.
- ◆ Adopt zero-tolerance policies for attacks against Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Defenders and clearly recognize that conditions for FPIC do not exist if attacks against defenders persist.

For funders

- ◆ Provide long-term funding for Indigenous Peoples to strengthen their rights, self-government systems, and livelihoods, ensuring that such funding is not limited to short-term project timelines.
- ◆ Provide flexible access mechanisms for Indigenous Peoples to strengthen their governance structures and pursue their self-determined energy transition pathways.
- ◆ Provide funding for Indigenous Peoples to convene at the regional and national levels to determine their own visions and priorities for a just energy transition.
- ◆ Provide flexible access mechanisms for Indigenous Peoples' advocacy strategies in the context of externally imposed oil, mining, and renewable energy projects.
- ◆ Provide flexible access mechanisms to support Indigenous Peoples' own solutions and community-led projects.
- ◆ Provide funding for Indigenous Peoples to exercise their rights in the face of externally imposed costs and burdens caused by the energy transition, such as costs related to access to information, social and environmental impact studies, consultation and FPIC processes, and litigation.
- ◆ Develop funding streams for the protection of Indigenous Peoples in isolation, in collaboration with relevant Indigenous Peoples and their representative organizations.



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