



SPE 126914

Oil and Gas Development and Social Responsibility—Aligning Project and Community Goals for Mutually Beneficial Outcomes

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This paper was prepared for presentation at the SPE International Conference on Health, Safety and Environment in Oil and Gas Exploration and Production held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 12–14 April 2010.

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Abstract

Even on the most high-risk projects in the some of the most challenging locations, it is possible and even advantageous to progress the social and environmental aspirations of host communities and contribute towards improving the lives of those communities.

This paper discusses the business case for developers for establishing joint development goals with host communities. It case studies a number of complex projects that are upturning traditional approaches to project development by engaging host communities in the development proposition.

The paper, supported by the case studies, considers:

- The importance of establishing the broader social aspirations of communities in relation to development at the outset.
- The criticality of establishing a mutual understanding of the commercial, non-negotiable parameters of the developer.
- The cumulative impacts and opportunities for both developer and community of multiple, large scale projects.
- The role of government and donors.
- The limitations of developers in contributing to broader social development.

The paper examines the social impact assessment and performance techniques used to understand and manage the risks and opportunities of oil and gas development. It illustrates the effectiveness of such an approach and provides practical experience for the benefit of future oil and gas exploration and production.

The case studies presented in this paper demonstrate the advantages of progressing project and social development aspirations mutually with commercial project development. They illustrate how oil and gas development can be a powerful force in the long-term, sustainable progression of developing societies.

The concepts described herein expand the boundaries of leading practice in respect to environmental and social impact assessment, community engagement and social responsibility in the oil and gas industry.