



When the Land Assigned for Economic Development Is Inhabited —and It Almost Always Is— Conflict Often Erupts

In an analysis of almost 73,000 mining, oil & gas, logging, and agriculture developments in eight tropical forested countries, **more than 93 percent** of these developments involve land inhabited by Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

Several of the countries examined have dedicated much of their land to natural resource extraction. More than **40 percent** of Peru, the host of the next round of international climate change negotiations, has been allocated by the government for timber,

mining, and oil & gas drilling operations. Indonesia, at **30 percent**, and Liberia, at **35 percent**, have also signed away large parts of their territories for large-scale agriculture, timber, and mining operations. As a point of reference, 30 percent of the United States would include all of the states east of the Mississippi River.

When the private sector, in partnership with local or national governments, attempt to proceed with these landscape-changing operations, conflicts often erupt with the Indigenous Peoples and local communities who live on the land.

LAND DEDICATED TO MINING, OIL & GAS, LOGGING, AND AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENTS





The new research identifies **three patterns of conflict** with extractive developments.

The first pattern is the **timing**, which shows that more than three quarters of all conflicts examined occur at the start of a project or when the project expands.

Instead of involving Indigenous Peoples and local communities at the inception of a project that involves their land, governments and corporations reach out to them only after the plans have been drawn up.

The second pattern of conflict stems from the **lack of compliance with the laws** governing natural resource development.

The analysis found a number of instances where the operations hurt the local environment, including the partial or complete destruction of forests or the contamination of the local community's drinking water, the soil on their farms, or the air that they breathe. The communities and local NGOs, when they uncover these impacts, challenge governments and the private sector perpetrators to halt the operations and remediate the problems. If nothing happens in response, conflict often follows.

The third pattern involves what the United Nations defines as **"Free, Prior, and Informed Consent."**

Oftentimes, the rights of the people who live on the land are disregarded; they are either informed of the situation after decisions have been finalized or negotiated with in bad faith, but never treated as full partners in the business transaction—like one would with a land owner in an industrialized country. Treating Indigenous Peoples and local communities as parties to all decisions involving the land they inhabit can alleviate many of the local conflicts that take place because of land disputes.

