



In Kenya, communities are concerned about the fair distribution of costs and benefits of potential oil exploration

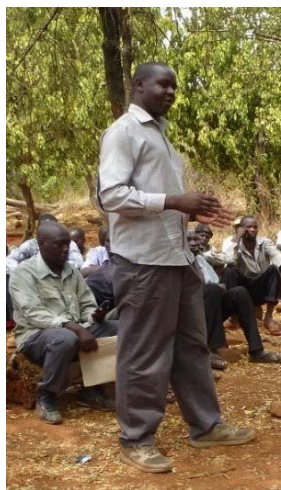
ISLP aims to help residents reach an agreement with the developer that will govern compensation and community benefits during initial exploration and outline a workable plan for continuing community engagement.

The discovery of potentially vast oil reserves in Kenya's lush Kerio Valley region has sparked anxiety among local residents. Community members—largely subsistence farmers—have heard reports of the destructive effects of oil exploration and development in neighboring Turkana and they are troubled by complaints from Turkana community members that the oil company has not meaningfully consulted with them regarding impacts on security, access to food and water, and livelihoods. Kerio Valley residents, lacking formal title to their lands, are especially worried about receiving appropriate compensation for land and resources. Although residents welcome economic growth that hydrocarbon development might bring, they are concerned about environmental damage, local employment opportunities, and fair distribution of benefits.

In the summer of 2014, a community-based organization from Kerio Valley requested ISLP's assistance in obtaining timely, clear, and complete information regarding oil development in the region and in representing the community with the oil company. In response, ISLP enlisted volunteer lawyers with experience negotiating on behalf of marginalized communities facing resource development. The lawyers are backed by a highly-skilled advisory team composed of an oil and gas expert, a corporate social responsibility specialist, authorities on relevant Kenyan law, and ISLP staff. ISLP's lawyers and staff have worked closely with members of the organization to identify community concerns and have traveled to the Kerio Valley to liaise with community members, discuss priorities and challenges, and strategize a way forward. ISLP is also engaging various local partners to collect valuable insight into relevant local issues and context.

In the coming months, ISLP and its volunteer lawyers will assist Kerio Valley residents in engaging the oil developer. This includes ongoing discussions with potentially-affected communities to gauge their concerns and demands, inform them of their rights, and develop a community mandate for engagement with the company and the government. In addition, the team will conduct workshops with local advocates and community representatives to build capacity, offer advice, formulate effective strategies for continuing engagement, and impart valuable negotiation skills.

Exploratory drilling in the Kerio Valley is slated to commence in mid-2015. In the meantime, ISLP aims to help residents reach an agreement with the developer that will govern compensation and community benefits during initial exploration and outline a workable plan for continuing community engagement once the scale of any oil reserves is determined. In so doing, ISLP hopes that Kerio Valley will become an example of true "shared prosperity" and avoid the resource curse that too often plagues communities facing resource development projects.



Kerio Valley residents at a community meeting with ISLP

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