
[A truly Clean Development Mechanism](#)

While climate change experts are trying to find "economically-viable" (meaning cheap) ways out of the climate mess created by Western-style economic development, indigenous peoples and local communities in many countries are in fact implementing a truly Clean Development Mechanism: they are banning oil and gas exploitation in their territories.

There is no discussion regarding the major role that fossil fuels have on climate change. It follows that humanity needs to switch its prevailing energy system --highly dependent on fossil fuels-- to another one based on clean, renewable and low impact energy sources. Local peoples preventing oil extraction are not only paving the way for such transition, but are at the same time keeping the carbon contained in fossil fuels safely stored under the earth's crust. They are not inventing ways to solve the effects of fossil fuel consumption; they are directly attacking the root cause of the problem: the extraction of oil and gas.

These peoples are benefiting humanity, but instead of receiving money for the service they are providing, what they usually receive is repression. They may be branded as enemies of the Motherland, or as subversives or simply as terrorists. Many have been murdered, imprisoned, tortured. They are not acceptable within the "carbon market" elite in spite of being the ones that truly act to prevent climate change. Every barrel of oil which is not extracted is a positive contribution to climate change and millions of barrels are still under the earth as a result of their struggle. What follows are a few examples of what some of these peoples have achieved so far.

In Colombia, the U'wa indigenous peoples have so far prevented oil extraction from their territory by Occidental Petroleum. They are currently preventing the exploitation of the Samore Block, with an estimated 1.5 billion barrels of oil.

In Ecuador, the Cofan people closed down the Dureno well in Amazonia, containing some 1,265,370 barrels of oil.

In Venezuela, the Warao people managed to get British petroleum out of their territory, containing an estimated 820 million barrels of oil.

Also in Ecuador, the Huaorani people managed to halt for a number of years the implementation of the ITTI (Ishpingo, Tambacocho, Tiputini, Imuya) project within the Yasuní National Park, with an estimated 265 million tons of oil and part of the territory has been now declared intangible and therefore closed to oil extraction activities.

In Nigeria, the Ijaw people closed down the existing oil wells in their area, in an operation carried out by the Ijaw youth in January 1999, which they named "Climate Change". A tentative estimate of the oil and gas thereby prevented from being extracted is difficult, but can be estimated at some 6 billion barrels.

There are many more examples of struggles, some of which have at least managed to delay oil or

gas exploitation --such as the Chad-Cameroon pipeline, the Yadana pipeline, the Peruvian Camisea gas project-- while others are struggling against the combined forces of governments and oil corporations to defend their territories against oil exploitation.

Are not all those struggles an example of a truly Clean Development Mechanism? Should there not be a mechanism to compensate countries for not extracting oil and gas? Should not local communities preventing oil exploration be compensated for keeping fossil fuels safely stored in perpetuity? Should not the Convention on Climate Change support a moratorium on new oil and gas exploration? These are all questions which many climate negotiators will try to avoid, precisely because they target the main issue: fossil fuel extraction. Many will try to concentrate on how to mitigate the effects, but will not be willing to address the true cause of climate change. They must not be allowed to get away with that.