



Case Study

OSHE–Organización Shuar del Ecuador

Indigenous Relations: Respecting Indigenous Peoples and their Ancestral Land

The Shuar Indigenous peoples have settled in the Ecuadorian and Peruvian Amazon for centuries. In the 16th century, they faced their first interaction with the Spaniards. Since they are a nomadic people, common activities among them include fishing, hunting, and subsistence agriculture. Economically, their location makes it extremely difficult to maintain active trading partners. As a result of this, Shuar Indigenous living conditions qualify as extreme poverty based on the UNDP – United Nations Development Program – Measurement of Poverty. The bright side is the Shuar peoples' powerful sense of pride concerning their land; it is a strong, intrinsic part of their historical identity. They are, likewise, proud of their ancestors, their culture, and their contributions as warriors who defended Ecuador during the war of 1995 against Peru (the Alto Cenepé War). They are a free-spirited people, strong and politically organized, and their attachment to and appreciation of their land has become a challenge for companies looking to access said land for mineral exploration. Since 2017, when O Trade was hired by Aurania – Ecuasolidus to lead Indigenous Relations and Corporate Social Responsibility, research, planning, and daily effort was put towards ensuring the respect of Indigenous peoples, their identity, their land, and culture, while building a bridge of collaboration with the company.

“ Recognition and respect for Indigenous peoples builds relationships of trust that allow us to participate and interact on an equal basis to build the design of our future, hand in hand with companies that seek to flourish within our territories.

The dedication, knowledge and experience of O Trade has allowed Indigenous peoples (Shuar) to be included and participate in making decisions that impact and reflect our future, protecting our ancestral territories.

Ruben Pitiur
President, Organización Shuar de Ecuador (OSHE)
OSHE represents 30,000 Shuar Indigenous in Ecuador

Solution

- O Trade conducted thorough research on Shuars, designing an approach to early stakeholder engagement that considers a high standard of Human and Indigenous Rights.
- O Trade acknowledged Shuar rights over their ancestral land, working in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment by assisting in granting legal rights to communities which lacked them.
- O Trade worked with Shuar Indigenous peoples, ensuring mineral exploration was an activity approved by Indigenous communities, and activities come under the rule of law, to prevent any violation of Indigenous rights.
- Finally, O Trade supported the development of a culture in the company around Indigenous inclusion and participation, thus allowing for transparency and building trust.

Impact/Benefit for the Operation

- O Trade's work for Aurania – Ecuasolidus built a relationship of trust with 34 Indigenous communities within the Bosque Protector del Kutuku. This work resulted in an unprecedented stretch with ZERO cases of conflict or internal violence between communities working in the field of mineral exploration.

Impact/Benefit for Indigenous Relations

- O Trade promoted over an estimated 300 meetings with Indigenous communities at grassroots level and promoted the signature of over 90 agreements between the company and the Shuar communities to grant land access as well as collaboration around employment, local sourcing, and logistics. This work resulted in an unprecedented stretch with ZERO cases of conflict or internal violence between communities working in the field of mineral exploration.
 - From 2017 to 2020, O Trade built a ground-breaking conflict-free environment for mineral exploration in Shuar territories, thus allowing for non-disrupted operations, giving importance to the Indigenous Relations, Land Access, and Stakeholder Engagement.
- O Trade helped build awareness around the recognition of Indigenous Rights, not only for others but also within the community itself. The value of collaboration in building mineral exploration was likewise promoted.
- Over 90 land access and collaboration agreements have been signed in 3 years, and 1,300 job opportunities have been created under a formal labour structure that was nonexistent at the time in the region. Approximately 800 families have benefited from the Indigenous early engagement strategy.



O Trade's work in this case highlights our effort towards contributing to the following **SDGs**:

