

January 13, 2023

IPN REQUEST 22/07

Notice of Registration

Request for Inspection

Bolivia: Santa Cruz Road Corridor Connector Project (San Ignacio - San Jose) (P152281)

Summary

1. On December 19, 2022, the Inspection Panel (the “Panel”) received a Request for Inspection (the “Request”) concerning the Bolivia: Santa Cruz Road Corridor Connector Project (San Ignacio - San Jose) (P152281) (the “Project”). Indigenous people’s leaders of four “Centrales Chiquitanos” (associations of Chiquitano indigenous people) in the area of La Chiquitania in eastern Bolivia (the “Requesters”) submitted the Request. They authorized two local civil society organizations to represent them in the Panel process, and authorized the Bank Information Center, a US-based nongovernmental organization, to be involved in the Panel process by providing support and advice. The Requesters and their representatives asked the Panel to keep their identities confidential.
2. The Requesters claim the Project activities threaten their land and livelihoods, as the road opens new opportunities for increasing illegal activities and for settlers to move into their area. They allege Project workers engaged in sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEA/H) of indigenous women and girls, including minors. They say the Project contractor’s hiring conditions do not guarantee the labor rights of the Chiquitanos working at Project sites. The Requesters allege inadequate design and the lack of meaningful consultation of the Project’s 2018 Indigenous People’s Plan (IPP), which they claim neither mitigated adverse impacts nor guaranteed access to Project benefits. The Requesters state they have since then been involved in discussions with the Bank team and the implementing agency and that it was only after three years of engagement that their inputs were included in the updated 2022 IPP. While they consider that document “*relatively strong*” and “*much improved*” compared to the 2018 IPP, they complain about remaining shortcomings and ineffective implementation of the 2022 IPP.
3. The Panel acknowledged receipt of the Request on its website on December 21, 2022, performed initial due diligence, and confirmed that this Request meets the admissibility criteria. Therefore, I hereby inform you that I have, on January 13, 2023, registered this Request.

The Project

4. The Project was approved on January 11, 2017, for a total cost of US\$ 230.05 million. An International Bank for Reconstruction and Development Loan is financing US\$ 200 million, an International Development Association Credit is financing US\$ 30 million equivalent, and the Borrower, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, is providing US\$ 50,000. The closing date of the Project at the time of approval was December 31, 2021, and the current, expected closing date is November 30, 2023.¹ It is a Category B project that has triggered safeguard policies on Environmental Assessment (OP/BP 4.01), Natural Habitats (OP/BP 4.04), Indigenous Peoples (OP/BP 4.10), Physical Cultural Resources (OP/BP 4.11), and Involuntary Resettlement (OP/BP 4.12). The Project was 32.67 percent disbursed as of the Panel's receipt of the Request. The Implementing Agency is the Administradora Boliviana de Carreteras (ABC) – the Bolivian Road Agency.²

5. The Project development objective is “*to improve transport accessibility along the road corridor between San Ignacio de Velasco and San Jose de Chiquitos.*”³ The Project has two components: Component A upgrades a 208-kilometer road connecting the towns of San Ignacio de Velasco and San Jose de Chiquitos in the Department of Santa Cruz; this work will follow the existing road alignment and remain mostly within the established right-of-way. Component B finances technical studies and project management, linking with the main investment by financing preparatory activities for upgrading the roughly 300-kilometer San Matias-San Ignacio de Velasco bi-oceanic road corridor connecting to Brazil (northern corridor).⁴ The issues raised in the Request relate to Component A.

The Request

6. The Requesters allege that the road upgrade under the Project affects the land and livelihoods of the Chiquitanos by opening up “*new opportunities*” for illegal activities, such as agribusiness and logging, as well as settlers to invade their territories. They claim that increasing rates of wildfires, which are exacerbated by these activities, also threaten their land and livelihoods.

7. The Requesters allege SEA/H, including child SEA/H of indigenous girls by the workers hired by the contractor and the sub-contractors for the Project activities. The Requesters claim several measures developed to prevent and respond to SEA/H involving children have not been implemented. Furthermore, they allege they are not informed about actions implemented on the ground to prevent and respond to child SEA/H despite their inquiries.

8. The Requesters also complain that the contractor's hiring conditions do not guarantee the labor rights of the Chiquitanos working at Project sites, including timely payments to them.

¹ The World Bank, [Restructuring Paper on a Proposed Project Restructuring of Santa Cruz Road Corridor Connector Project \(San Ignacio - San Jose\) Approved on January 11, 2017 to Ministerio de Planificación del Desarrollo](#), December 21, 2021.

² The World Bank, [Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Loan in the Amount of US\\$ 200 million and a Proposed Credit in the Amount of US\\$ 30 million to the Plurinational State of Bolivia for a Santa Cruz Road Corridor Connector Project \(San Ignacio - San Jose\)](#) (PAD), December 13, 2016, pp. i-iii.

³ PAD, p. 5, para. 18.

⁴ PAD, pp. 5 and 6, paras. 22-24.

9. The Requesters claim that since 2018, they have repeatedly informed Bank Management about the inadequacies of and the need to improve the original 2018 IPP. They allege it insufficiently identified – and therefore did not include – appropriate mitigation measures of the Project impacts and did not guarantee access to Project benefits. According to the Request, the Chiquitanos were neither meaningfully consulted during the development of the 2018 IPP nor informed about the negative impacts, risks, and benefits of the Project during the initial consultation.

10. The Requesters state that, following three years of dialogue and negotiations with the Bank team and the ABC, their inputs were included in the updated IPP approved in January 2022. They consider that document “*relatively strong*” and “*much improved*” compared to the 2018 version; for example, it increased the funds – from US\$ 3.6 million to US\$ 9.3 million – going directly to the Centrales for their institutional strengthening, capacity building, and infrastructure, and included funds for the Chiquitanos “*to protect their territories.*” However, the Requesters allege that the 2022 IPP still lacks mitigation measures to address “*land insecurity and settler invasion.*” They claim the Project threatens Chiquitanos with pending land titles, and that the IPP should include reference to land titling. The Requesters state the updated IPP “*exists only on paper and has not been implemented [which] makes it worthless in preventing harm resulting to the community from the project.*” They allege that although road construction started in 2019, most of the measures intended to avoid, minimize, mitigate, or compensate for adverse impacts and provide social and economic benefits to the indigenous peoples have yet to be implemented four years later. They believe the Bank Policy on Indigenous Peoples is being violated.

Initial Due Diligence

11. After receipt of the Request, the Panel conducted initial due diligence and verified that it meets the admissibility criteria for registration. The Request is not frivolous, absurd, or anonymous, and was submitted by individuals living in the Project area in Bolivia who claim to be affected by Project activities. The Panel received earlier correspondence between the Requesters’ representatives and the Bank concerning these issues. The Panel is therefore satisfied that the issues have been brought to the attention of the Bank prior to submission of this Request for Inspection. The Panel also verified that the subject matter of the Request does not concern issues of procurement, and at the time of receipt of the Request, the Project was 32.67 percent disbursed with a closing date of November 30, 2023.

12. During its review of the Request, the Panel spoke with the Requesters’ representatives on January 6, 2023, to understand their concerns better, seek clarifications, and inform them about the Panel’s process and mandate.

13. As part of its initial due diligence process, the Panel met with Management on January 12, 2023. Management briefed the Panel on the Project context and its current status, and provided its views on the issues raised in the Request. Management clarified that there is no 2018 IPP, but rather an IPP for the Chiquitanos that was approved in January 2016, which indigenous people representatives asked to be updated in 2018.

Registration of the Request

14. As provided in paragraph 18 of the Panel’s Resolution (the “Resolution”), “*the Chairperson of the Panel shall inform the Executive Directors and the President of the Bank promptly upon receiving a request for inspection.*”⁵ With this notice I hereby inform you that I have, on January 13, 2023, registered the above-mentioned Request.

15. The Panel’s registration implies no judgment whatsoever concerning the merits of a Request for Inspection. As provided in paragraph 19 of the Resolution,⁶ Bank Management must provide the Panel within 21 business days (by February 14, 2023) a response to the issues raised in the Request for Inspection. The subject matter that Management must deal with in the response to the Request is set out in paragraph 20 of the Resolution.

16. After receiving the Management Response, the Panel will “*determine whether the request meets the eligibility criteria set out in paragraphs 13 to 15 [...] and shall make a recommendation to the Executive Directors as to whether the matter should be investigated.*”⁷ This Request has been assigned IPN Request Number 22/07.

Yours sincerely,



Ramanie Kunanayagam
Chairperson

Attachments

Mr. David Malpass, President
International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
International Development Association

The Executive Directors and Alternates
International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
International Development Association

Requesters (confidential)

⁵ The World Bank Inspection Panel, [Resolution No. IBRD 2020-0004 and Resolution No. IDA 2020-0003](#) (the “Resolution”), September 8, 2020, para. 18.

⁶ The Resolution, para. 19.

⁷ The Resolution, para. 22.