

Global perspectives on exploration and ESG

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With the global drive to decarbonize, the extractives industry is facing challenges that go beyond geotechnical complexities of the green energy transition. Across jurisdictions, social and cultural factors are having an increasing impact on project success or failure at the exploration phase. The search for the critical minerals needed to make this transition possible is taking place in locations that face complex environmental, social, and governance challenges, where exploration or mining could have serious consequences for local ecosystems and communities. Explorers can no longer responsibly claim minimal social or environmental footprint as a pathway to “land access” or “social acceptance” for exploration activities. Short-term transactional approaches are widely understood to be detrimental in the medium and long-term for project-affected communities, and the skill sets required from early exploration go well beyond geology and geophysics. Over the past five years, researchers at the Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining have brought evidence to the scale of these challenges. This opening presentation at the ESG session of the SEG Conference will set the scene from a broad global perspective, showcasing research that highlights the extent and scale of the challenges and reflecting on the implications for exploration teams seeking to better understand and address the social aspects of exploration.