

Social Intervention Protocol Implementation as a Tool in the Preparation of the Socio-Environmental Baseline in the Sierra de Maz Uranium Exploration Project, Argentina

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The objective of this paper is to present how the correct implementation of the first stages of the social intervention protocol serves as an effective tool to prepare the Socio-Environmental Baseline (SEBL) required in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of a given uranium mining project.

The specific study area of this paper belongs to the Sierra de Maz uranium exploration project which is located in the Western Pampean Ranges, La Rioja province, Argentina.

In Argentina, during the last decade, groups that oppose uranium mining have established themselves as an important and influential social actor because their actions can lead to the interruption of mining projects, and eventually to developing provincial and local laws that limit or prohibit nuclear minerals mining.

The Raw Materials Exploration Branch of the National Atomic Energy Commission designed a “social intervention protocol” that is implemented with the objective of guaranteeing the normal development of activities in the initial stages of uranium mining, being able to carry out in a framework of harmony with communities, authorities, institutions and other stakeholders involved, in compliance with current legislation.

Current legislation related to mining projects establishes that the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) should include the preparation of an Environmental Baseline (EBL) which in turn considers both the physical environmental and the social environment factors. This report is focused on the elaboration of the social environmental component. Elaboration of a correct SEBL is fundamental in order to make an assessment of the current social situation, and from that point being able to program the actions to be implemented to obtain the Social License to operate. It should be noted that this tool will be useful to delineate a frame of reference for all the stages of the uranium production cycle, from exploration to remediation and closure.