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Application of the concept of 'Social Licence to Operate' beyond infrastructure projects

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Application of the concept of 'Social Licence to Operate' beyond infrastructure projects

David Jijelava

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PhD thesis

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Thursday 31 January 2019 at 11:00 hours

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OUTCOMES OF THE CHAPTERS OF THIS THESIS

Chapter 2 – published as: Jijelava, D., & Vanclay, F. (2017). Legitimacy, credibility and trust as the key components of a social licence to operate: An analysis of BP's projects in Georgia. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 140, 1077-1086.

The chapter considers the extent to which the concept of Social Licence to Operate (SLO) can be applied in actual practice by considering BP's activities in Georgia, especially the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Southern Caucasus Pipeline projects. The chapter adapts the model originally developed by Thomson and Boutilier, particularly by further elaborating their three underlying concepts: legitimacy, credibility and trust. The chapter concludes that the revised Social Licence framework can be usefully applied and BP has achieved at least an 'acceptance' level from the local community. The chapter draws lessons from BP's experience that can be applied in other projects.

Chapter 3 – published as: Jijelava, D., & Vanclay, F. (2018). How a large project was halted by the lack of a social licence to operate: Testing the applicability of the Thomson and Boutilier model. *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, 73, 31-40.

The chapter assesses why the project lacked a SLO and what lessons can be learnt from this experience. The Khudoni Hydroelectric Power Plant in the Svaneti region of Georgia is analysed. Using the Thomson and Boutilier model of SLO as an analytical framework, the chapter elaborates its key elements – legitimacy, credibility and trust – in the context of dam and hydropower projects and assesses where the Khudoni project failed. The conclusion of the chapter is that the project lacked legitimacy, with local communities not seeing any social justification for the project. The credibility of the project and proponent was weak amongst the local population, and trust was absent at all phases of the project. The concept of SLO has the potential to encourage project proponents to consider and implement activities which will lead to better outcomes for all parties. The findings suggest there is a strong business case for companies to take the concept seriously. Improving social performance will assist projects in gaining a social licence to operate and grow.

Chapter 4 – published as: Jijelava, D., & Vanclay, F. (2014). Assessing the social licence to operate of development cooperation organizations: A case study of Mercy Corps in Samtskhe-Javakheti, Georgia. *Social Epistemology*, 28(3-4), 297-317.

The chapter examines the applicability of the concept of SLO for international humanitarian and development cooperation organizations. Relevant literature on SLO is reviewed and criteria that can be applicable to the work of development agencies are derived. The case of an international NGO, Mercy Corps, is considered. The results can be utilized by development practitioners and humanitarian organizations as well as academics who want to explore the applicability of SLO in the domain of non-governmental organizations and other non-commercial settings.

Chapter 5 – published as: Jijelava, D., & Vanclay, F. (2014). Social licence to operate through a gender lens: The challenges of including women's interests in development assistance projects. *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal*, 32(4), 283-293.

The chapter analyses the concept of SLO from a gender perspective. The challenges associated with obtaining a gender-aware social licence for development assistance organizations working in conservative, traditional rural societies are reviewed. Focusing on CARE International's JOIN project in Georgia, six categories of challenges are identified: cultural protocols and gender roles reinforce and exacerbate women's traditional disadvantage; the existing relationships between women and local authorities limits their opportunities; the limited mobility of women creates additional barriers; there is a gender disparity in access to information and resources; women are exploited as a means to access financial resources; and the out-migration of men means that many women are at risk of increasing vulnerability and may not benefit from development assistance projects.

