

REALITIES OF UNDERTAKING RECLAMATION ACTIVITIES WITHIN THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES¹

by

Alan R. Scheibner² P.Ag.

Abstract. Western Oilfield Environmental Services Ltd. (WOES) has designed and conducted environmental assessments of oil and gas exploration projects that have been carried out in third world countries. These opportunities have provided the company with an insight into the realities of attempting to use North American standards and guidelines as a basis for the development and application of reclamation techniques. This paper identifies common reclamation issues associated with seismic and exploratory drilling projects and discusses the factors that influenced their implementation in four different countries.

The mitigation factors that were encountered during the environmental assessments of exploration activities in Costa Rica, Ghana, Madagascar, and Botswana are addressed in this paper.

The development of national oil reserves is crucial to each of these countries. They are all net importers of oil, which requires the expenditure of significant portions of their Gross National Product to meet current energy needs. As these exploration programs are conducted in the national interest, regulatory control may be loosened to ensure that all available funds are dedicated to finding or evaluating hydrocarbons. The impact of this consideration and other factors, such as demographics, cultural setting and politics, on the implementation of reclamation activities are discussed.

It was observed that all of the above factors modified reclamation plans that had been based solely upon North American standards and perceptions. The author concludes that these mitigating factors must be addressed in the pre-project planning and be integrated into the design of reclamation activities if a consistent approach to reclamation issues is to be achieved.

Additional Key Words: environmental protection planning, environmental regulations, land conservation and reclamation guidelines, surface rights, construction guidelines, waste disposal, erosion control, revegetation, Third World Countries.

¹ Paper presented at the conference Reclamation, A Global Perspective, held in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, August 27-31, 1989.

² President and General Manager, Western Oilfield Environmental Services Ltd., 100, 622 - 5th Avenue SW, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2P 0M6.

