

Offshore oil exploration and impact assessment in Greenland

According to the United States Geological Survey, the Greenland basin is estimated to contain 17 billion barrels of oil and potentially 138 billion cubic feet of natural gas (Bird et al. 2008). Other, more moderate, models predict that Greenland contains "substantial reserves" (see eg. Cavallo 2002, Geuns 2012). Oil development is therefore high on the agenda in Greenland. It is being pursued both as the means to grow the economy and as a path to increased economic and political independence from Denmark (Østhagen 2012).

Oil projects are expected to produce benefits for Greenlanders, but these benefits cannot be achieved without careful planning and project management. To ensure that negative impacts are mitigated and that positive outcomes are achieved, Impact Assessments (IA) have been implemented to promote sustainable development in the sector. Additional Impact Benefit Agreements (IBA) have to be negotiated between the affected communities, the government, and oil companies to ensure that social investments are made to secure long-term benefits for local communities.

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