



Session 2 Recap: Community Ownership in Practice

Pioneering Indigenous equity partnerships in large-scale renewable energy in Latin America

Why this conversation matters

The JustRE Alliance **Community of Practice (CoP)** exists to **turn the idea of community ownership into implementation at scale**. In **Session 1**, we aligned on what “community ownership” means and surfaced four pillars for making it real: define the model, start **FPIC** early and treat it as ongoing practice, plan for capacity on **both sides**, and align finance.

Session 2 built on that foundation with practice-grounded presentation by **Juan Dumas (co-founder, Meliquina)**, facilitated by **Yumnaa Firfirey, Director of Towards Uhuru**. The session focused on **how Indigenous communities can become genuine equity partners in utility-scale projects**—moving beyond social investment to shared risk, shared governance, and shared returns.

The case: Antú I Solar with the Mapuche Millaqueo community (Argentina)

Juan presented **Antú I Solar, an 18 MW PV project in northern Patagonia**, co-developed by **three partners**:

- **Millaqueo (Mapuche) community** – ~38 families (~150 people) organized as an association
- **Meliquina** – community-equity partnership developer

Sustentar Energía – technical renewable-energy partner

What makes it different



Co-development from day one

The team approached Millaqueo not with a pre-packaged project, but with a **business invitation: “If you’re not interested, that’s okay—this only moves forward as a partnership.”**



FPIC as consent, not consultation

Because the community is a co-developer, consent is embedded: access to the same data, involvement in every material decision, and **the right to say no**.



Site selection reversed

The process began by **mapping exclusions**—sacred places, cemeteries, ceremonial zones, and sensitive ecosystems. Only then did engineers search for a viable site outside those zones.



Real milestones secured

Studies completed, land lease signed, grid connection point obtained, and environmental license granted. The project is now investor-ready.

Ownership & finance in practice



During development, partners agreed to recognize **sweat equity**—the value each brings before construction finance. The development company was split equally (community ~34%, Meliquina ~33%, Sustentar ~33%).



At construction, a major equity investor and bank debt will enter. This typically dilutes early developers dramatically. The team is exploring **financing solutions** so the community can retain a **significant minority stake** (and therefore influence), even if that requires **prudently structured debt**.



Crucially, equity is **not granted for free** and not a **quid-pro-quo for “not opposing”**. The community is a business partner that adds measurable value.

How communities add value (beyond land)



Co-development work

(e.g., constructive engagement with authorities helped accelerate environmental permitting—time is money).



De-risking and investability

(investors and DFIs favor projects with credible social performance and shared value; opposition risk falls when the community itself is inviting investment).



Market access

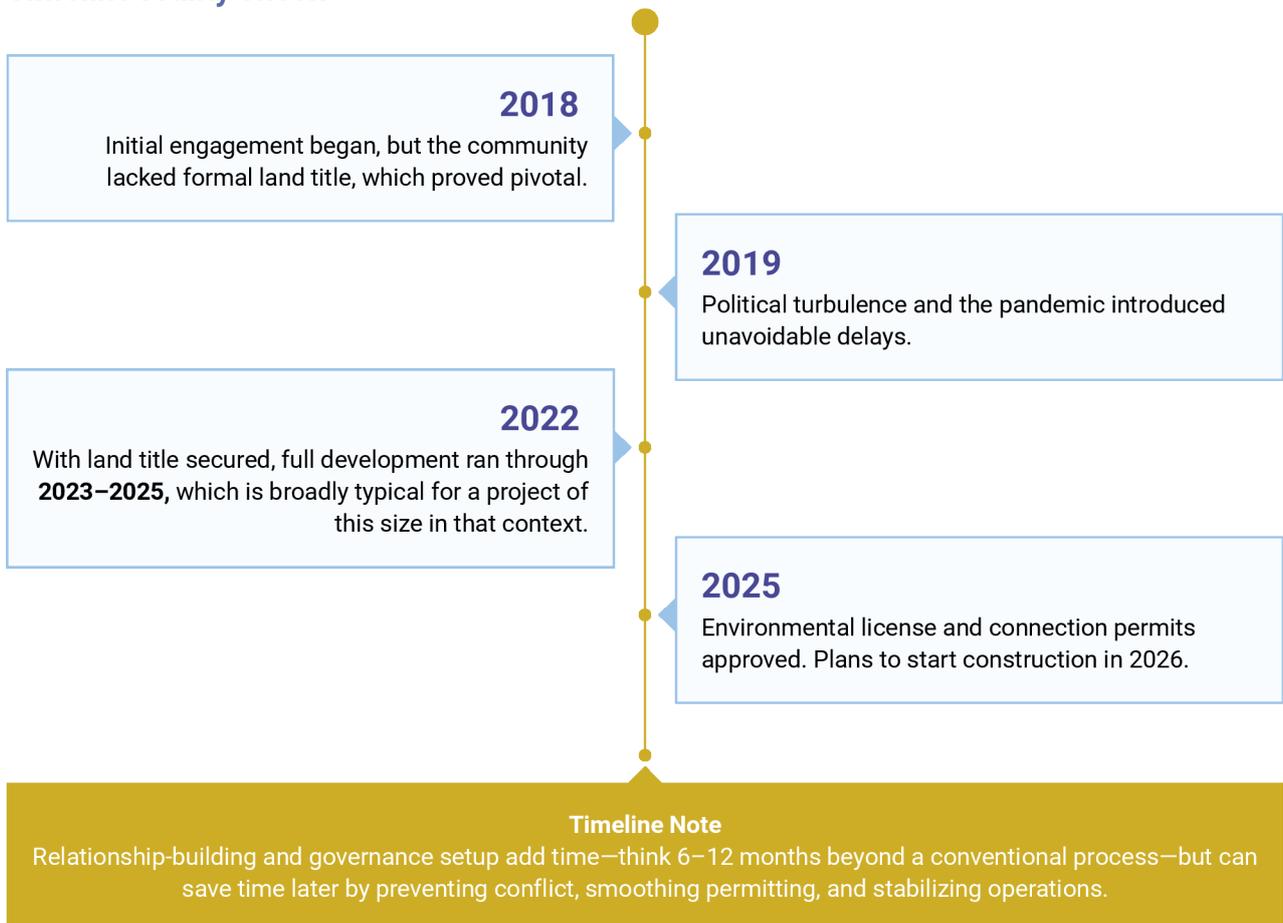
(communities can open doors with regional off-takers who might not engage with a small standalone IPP but will engage with a respected local partner).



Land lease as capital

(the net present value of a fair, long-term lease can be contributed as part of the community's equity).

Timeline reality check



Enablers & constraints (and what to do about them)



From the developer's perspective

- **Partner due diligence matters.** Not every community is ready to co-own a utility-scale asset today. **Meliquina uses a readiness lens** that looks at governance systems, basic financial management, women's participation in decision-making, relationships with neighbors and authorities, and more. **Gaps are normal; the question is whether they can realistically be bridged with support.**
- **Leadership is catalytic.** Visionary, trusted community leaders who share decision-making and are curious about new models can accelerate learning and alignment.
- **Policy uncertainty is survivable.** The team stopped trying to "time politics" and focused on building investable projects that can attract either international capital when markets are open or domestic capital when they are not.

- **Land ownership helps, but it's not the only path.** Antú I Solar benefits from community-owned land; however, there are **other ownership pathways** where land is state-owned or privately held (to be explored in a future CoP session).



From the community's perspective (implied in the dialogue)

- **Equal partnership means equal information.** Access to models, contracts, and data—plus the patient capacity-building to use them.
- **Sweat equity is real equity.** Contributions must be recognized in the capitalization structure, not just applauded in a CSR report.
- **Governance agreements are essential.** If final equity ends up small, robust governance rights (vetoes on key issues, reserved matters, information rights, fair dividend policies) protect long-term interests.

What conventional developers ask—and how this model answers



"Doesn't this take longer?"

A little—up front. But **co-development can shorten later phases** by reducing conflict, speeding permits, and stabilizing operations.



"What's the business case?"

Lower social risk, stronger DFI appetite, differentiated market access, and a pipeline advantage on community-controlled land—**plus** the reputational upside of doing the right thing the right way.



"Isn't equity for communities a giveaway?"

No. **Equity is earned** through value creation (co-development, lease value, market access, risk reduction), and when needed, financed prudently.

Quotes that stuck with us

1

"This is not energy access. It's about communities participating as economic players in the energy transition."

Juan Dumas
co-founder, Meliquina

2

"We want investors to put on their business hat. If this isn't competitive, it will stay boutique and won't scale."

Juan Dumas
co-founder, Meliquina

3

"Begin with what is sacred and untouchable, and only then ask what is feasible."

Session reflection

Practical takeaways you can use tomorrow



Flip your E&S workflow

Map exclusions (cultural & environmental) first; site selection comes after.



Make FPIC continuous

Treat consent as a co-development process, not a one-off consultation.



Price sweat equity

Name and quantify the community's contributions early. Put it in the model.



Design for dilution

Pre-plan how the community retains a **meaningful minority** at financial close (e.g., dedicated community equity facilities, guarantees, step-in options).



Build two-way capacity

Train community leaders in project finance—and train developers in community governance and Indigenous rights.



Do readiness checks—together

Use a transparent, co-created tool to spot gaps and agree on how to bridge them.