



Submission to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change regarding

Views on issues relating to Indigenous Peoples and local communities for the development and application of methodologies for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries

by

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1. Background

The destruction and degradation of tropical forests contributes up to 20 percent of annual greenhouse gas emissions. As a result, rapidly and dramatically slowing the destruction and degradation of these forests is necessary for successfully mitigating the climate change crisis. Significant progress in this effort depends on effective global policies that provide incentives to recognize the maintenance of standing forests as a valid form of avoided carbon emissions.

The Nature Conservancy supports a system of financial incentives, carbon credit markets and technical assistance that would allow developing nations to generate the funds needed to conserve forests, reduce emissions, protect biodiversity and improve local livelihoods. A well-designed framework for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) will depend upon, among other things, equitable participation and distribution of benefits, including for Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Forest resources directly contribute to the livelihoods of 90 percent of 1.2 billion people living in extreme poverty and indirectly support the natural environment that nourishes agriculture and the food supplies of nearly half the population of the developing world (World Bank, 2002). If not done well, REDD has the potential to marginalize Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

One of The Nature Conservancy's core values is the **respect for people, communities and cultures**. The Nature Conservancy has worked effectively with Indigenous Peoples and local communities in many places throughout the world. Through this work, the Conservancy has gained valuable experience and **fully recognizes local communities' and Indigenous Peoples' central role and responsibility in many conservation initiatives:**

- Indigenous Peoples and local communities **play an important role in protecting ecosystem services that are important for the society as a whole**, and The Nature Conservancy believes that they **should be equitably remunerated for the provision of these services**.

- **Indigenous Peoples and local communities are key allies in helping to fulfill the Conservancy's mission** to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.
- Working effectively with Indigenous Peoples requires **consideration of and adaptation to their values, timing and decision making mechanisms.**

Some examples of our work with Indigenous Peoples and local communities include:

- In Brazil, indigenous lands occupy 22% of the Amazon region, an area which is five times larger than that designated as protected areas. Deforestation rates in those areas are lower than in government run protected areas (IPAM, 2006). We support the development of an Environmental Management System for Indigenous Lands in collaboration with the lead indigenous organization and the Brazilian Government.
- In Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Costa Rica and Peru, we actively implement capacity-building for indigenous leaders to enable their participation in national and international negotiations such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- In Wakatobi, Indonesia, The Nature Conservancy works with the fisher community of Tomia Island to establish a group called Komunto to collaboratively develop the fisher community's resources and sustainably manage marine resources.
- In the upper Yangtze River in China, The Nature Conservancy works with communities to protect and restore forests that are most likely to reduce flood damages and mudslides.
- In Namibia we are starting to support a community-based natural resource management program in the Kunene to preserve critical wildlife corridors, maintaining the communities' sustainable use of natural resources, and offering a base for sustainable ecotourism ventures.

The Nature Conservancy's forest conservation work with Indigenous Peoples and local communities has also included the development of forest carbon activities, promotion of community forestry projects, development of livelihood options that will promote sustainable management of resources, the devolution of forest management to local communities, and improved forest governance.

In 1997, The Nature Conservancy and Fundación Amigos de la Naturaleza (FAN), with the Bolivian government and three energy companies, created the Noel Kempff Mercado Climate Action Project to simultaneously address climate change, conserve biodiversity and bring sustainable benefits to local communities. By protecting 1.5 million acres of tropical forest that were threatened by timber harvesting and agricultural conversion, the project is expected to prevent the release of up to 5.8 million tons of carbon dioxide over the next 30 years.

The Nature Conservancy **supports the application of rigorous project design and implementation standards for forest carbon activities, to provide incentives and safeguards for biodiversity conservation and social benefits.** The newly revised Climate, Community & Biodiversity (CCB) Standards, of which TNC is a supporting partner, provide an excellent model for how community and biodiversity concerns may be addressed in REDD activities. These standards are being modified to apply to national REDD programs.

Based on our acquired experience around the world, we respectfully offer to SBSTA a set of principles that have guided our work with Indigenous Peoples and local communities that could be of value in designing an international REDD framework that is efficient, effective and equitable.

The content of this submission, including these principles, reflects the current state of thinking in The Nature Conservancy. These views are likely to be further refined as we continue to develop our conservation work with communities on the ground and our understanding of developing effective REDD mechanisms and processes from the local to the global level.

2. Guiding Principles on REDD, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities

- Genuine and effective engagement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities is essential in the design and implementation of REDD frameworks.
 - The Nature Conservancy supports and promotes the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in decision making processes that affect their rights and well-being, in accordance with relevant international agreements, national laws, and human rights principles. The Nature Conservancy believes that participation should be more than consultation and that it should lead to empowerment and effective involvement in decision making.
 - Local, national and international REDD processes should secure the access of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to transparent information and to capacity building of their organizations in order for them to have informed participation.
 - Indigenous Peoples and local communities should have the opportunity to effectively participate in discussions of REDD project design and implementation, including effective participation in decision making surrounding REDD project and program design with companies, government and other stakeholders.
 - Communities, Indigenous Peoples, smallholders, local governments, civil society organizations, and development organizations should have the opportunity to define and undertake demonstration initiatives.

- REDD frameworks should support and promote legal recognition, demarcation, and protection of indigenous lands and territories, as well as:
 - Respect for customary governance systems of indigenous territories and community conserved areas and the values that have led to their success in terms of forest conservation.
 - Respect for Indigenous Peoples' traditional land management systems and knowledge that promote environmental conservation and application of traditional technologies.
 - Respect for the rights of Indigenous Peoples to maintain and develop their political, economic, and social systems and institutions.

- Free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples for REDD measures or activities that involve or affect the territories or lands that they occupy or rely on for their livelihoods should be respected in the design and implementation of REDD frameworks.
 - *Free* implies no coercion, intimidation or manipulation;
 - *Prior* implies that consent has been sought sufficiently in advance of any authorization or commencement of activities and respects time requirements of indigenous consultation; and
 - *Informed* implies that the information provided is complete and accurate and is disseminated properly and fully.

- Equitable distribution of both the costs and benefits resulting from REDD measures or activities should be ensured, including:
 - Clear definition and equitable allocation of carbon rights should be pursued at the national level and observed by international institutions and investors;
 - Protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to maintain access and use of natural resources needed for their survival and well-being and their rights to social and economic development;

- Protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to maintain access to services provided by ecosystems;
 - Appropriate governance systems and financial mechanisms should be in place to ensure that local communities and Indigenous Peoples can access and benefit from REDD incentive systems.
- Any REDD framework should ensure respect for Indigenous Peoples' spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies, as well as their organizations, institutions, traditional knowledge, heritage, expressions, technologies and intellectual property.
- The Nature Conservancy is opposed to any form of discrimination against indigenous and non-indigenous women and men on any grounds, and rejects any means that provokes their inequality or limits their access to opportunities.