



# Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity



## Views on Issues Relating to Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities for the Development and Application of Methodologies (FCCC/SBSTA/2008/L.23, paragraph 11)

### Submission from the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

#### *Introduction*

As the UNFCCC considers issues relating to indigenous peoples and local communities for the development and application of methodologies relating to REDD, it may be helpful to consider the broader context of the interrelationship between forests and indigenous peoples and local communities.

The World Bank estimates that more than 1.6 billion people depend on forests to varying degrees for their livelihoods.<sup>1</sup> Among these are the approximately 60 million indigenous peoples who are “almost wholly dependent” on forests.<sup>2</sup> For indigenous peoples and local communities, forests provide environmental services including food, water, timber, non-timber forest products, energy, and medicine. Forests are also important and irreplaceable repositories of cultural and spiritual heritage.

Because of the importance of forests in maintaining healthy livelihoods and cultures, indigenous peoples and local communities have consistently requested that they participate in all levels of planning and implementation of REDD.

#### *1. Relationship between forest ecosystem resilience and carbon stocks*

In the context of methodologies for REDD, it is of significant importance for indigenous peoples and local communities that their access to forests and forest ecosystem services be maintained, and that the biodiversity and resilience of forests be preserved. This could be supported through the consideration of traditional management practices in REDD methodologies as a tool to reduce risks of carbon stock loss.

Evidence suggests that resilient ecosystems are stable for longer periods and thus provide greater long-term benefits, for example in terms of carbon sequestration, than forests that are less

<sup>1</sup> World Bank, 2002, *A Revised Forest Strategy for the World Bank Group*. World Bank, Washington, D.C.

<sup>2</sup> World Bank, 2008, *Q&A: Climate Investment Funds*.

[http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTCC/Resources/@@A\\_CIF\\_July\\_1\\_08.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTCC/Resources/@@A_CIF_July_1_08.pdf)



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resilient and therefore frequently in a state of change.<sup>3</sup> It is likely that forest ecosystem resilience, which is linked in various ways to biodiversity and traditional management practices,<sup>4</sup> increases the permanence of the carbon pool in forests.<sup>5</sup>

Resistance to change is conferred at several levels through biodiversity in the system including genetic diversity, species diversity, ecosystem adaptability, and landscape distribution.<sup>6</sup> However, if climate change substantially changes genetic tolerances and the capacity of species to respond to disturbance, especially in the face of increased frequency or intensity of perturbations, risks of loss of carbon stored in biomass will increase.

Such losses of biomass carbon stocks are likely to be exacerbated and less predictable across large landscapes that lack connectivity due to habitat loss and forest fragmentation, leading to an inability of the species within systems to disperse and reassemble in more suitable locations.<sup>7</sup> As such, climate change and land use change are linked, which also creates a link between carbon stocks, REDD and forest management practices.

In light of these findings, the UNFCCC could consider adopting monitoring mechanisms that include measures of the resilience and stability of forest ecosystems among other indicators of carbon storage. These qualities (resilience and stability) will enhance carbon storage efforts and ensure that forest ecosystems serve multiple functions that will benefit diverse species and human communities.

## ***2. Integration of scientific monitoring and research and indigenous knowledge by involving indigenous knowledge holders in ongoing monitoring activities***

In addition to preventing deforestation on their lands and territories, indigenous peoples and local communities can also participate in project monitoring of forest degradation, the identification of key indicators and in verifying data collected by other means, such as through independent, on-the-ground verification.

Examples of successful approaches to involve local communities in carbon monitoring include training of holders of local traditional knowledge in the use of modern forest inventory methods, including GPS.

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<sup>3</sup> Holling, C. S. 1973. Resilience and stability of ecological systems. *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 4:1-23; Kinzig, A.P., P. Ryan, M. Etienne, H. Allison, T. Elmqvist, and B.H. Walker. 2006. *Ecol. and Soc.* 11: article 20; Malhi, Y., J.T. Roberts, R.A. Betts, T.J. Killeen, W. Li, and C.A. Nobre. Climate change, deforestation and the fate of the Amazon. *Science* 319: 169-172.

<sup>4</sup> Diaz, S., and M. Cabido. 2001. Vive la difference: plant functional diversity matters to ecosystem processes. *Trends Ecol. and Evol.* 16: 646-655; Diaz, S., A.J. Symstad, F.S. Chapin, D.A. Wardle, and L.F. Huenneke. 2003. Functional diversity revealed by removal experiments. *Trends in Ecol. and Evol.* 18: 140-146; Kinzig, A.P., P. Ryan, M. Etienne, H. Allison, T. Elmqvist, and B.H. Walker. 2006. *Ecol. and Soc.* 11: article 20.

<sup>5</sup> Malhi, Y., J.T. Roberts, R.A. Betts, T.J. Killeen, W. Li, and C.A. Nobre. Climate change, deforestation and the fate of the Amazon. *Science* 319: 169-172.

<sup>6</sup> Holling, C. S. 1973. Resilience and stability of ecological systems. *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 4:1-23.

<sup>7</sup> Fischer, J., D.B. Lindenmayer, and A.D. Manning. 2006. Biodiversity, ecosystem function, and resilience: ten guiding principles for commodity production landscapes. *Front. Ecol. and Envir.* 4: 80-86.

These approaches are comparatively low cost, can improve local participation and transparency; and present an opportunity to collect a wealth of relevant forest data (forest inventory) including risk assessments linked to possibilities of the loss of carbon stocks.

One example of an initiative that engaged indigenous knowledge in environmental management for climate change mitigation is the West Arnhem Land Fire Abatement Project in Australia. This initiative draws on indigenous fire management practices to help shift the seasonal timing of fires to avoid highly destructive late season fires. The project combines the intimate local knowledge of Australian indigenous communities with technological tools such as fire-mapping technology. Although the project is not part of a regulatory trading scheme, and although it focuses on savanna rather than forested land, the implications of cooperation between indigenous knowledge holders and scientists suggest that indigenous knowledge can be relevant to climate change mitigation activities through REDD.<sup>8</sup>

### ***3. Local level, community-based management of forests provides opportunities to involve indigenous peoples and local communities in REDD***

Indigenous peoples and local communities possess a high level of interest in and commitment to participation in all decision-making and research activities that affect their traditional territories and their rights to use these lands and resources.

Past experience with forest governance initiatives suggest that these initiatives are most successful and sustainable over the long term if they take into account local people's aspirations and customary use of territory. As such, including local communities in the management of forest ecosystems encourages greater and more stable carbon storage and biodiversity conservation.

Recognizing these links, a number of organizations are working at the national level to implement projects that aim at enhancing involvement of indigenous peoples in sustainable forest management, biodiversity conservation or the governance of protected areas. For example, WWF is working in regions such as the Congo Basin<sup>9</sup> and Latin America<sup>10</sup> towards the conservation of tropical forest ecosystems in indigenous communities. IUCN also works in countries such as Kenya, Brazil and the Democratic Republic of Congo<sup>11</sup>, supporting local communities and the use of traditional knowledge for the conservation of forests.

Various successful examples of community based forest management (CBF) systems also exist in the countries where REDD pilot and demonstration activities are taking place or are planned. For example, a pilot project by the United Nations University - Institute of Advanced Studies Traditional Knowledge Initiative (UNU-IAS TKI) on *Promoting the effective participation of indigenous peoples in REDD processes* was initiated in July 2008. The overall aim of this project is to assist with current efforts to raise awareness about REDD issues amongst

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<sup>8</sup> [http://savanna.cdu.edu.au/information/arnhem\\_fire\\_project.html](http://savanna.cdu.edu.au/information/arnhem_fire_project.html)

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.panda.org/about\\_wwf/what\\_we\\_do/policy/people\\_environment/projects/index.cfm?uProjectID=9F0802](http://www.panda.org/about_wwf/what_we_do/policy/people_environment/projects/index.cfm?uProjectID=9F0802)

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.panda.org/about\\_wwf/where\\_we\\_work/project/projects/index.cfm?uProjectID=PE0866](http://www.panda.org/about_wwf/where_we_work/project/projects/index.cfm?uProjectID=PE0866)

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/forest/fp\\_resources/fp\\_resources\\_case/](http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/forest/fp_resources/fp_resources_case/)

indigenous peoples and to assist them in developing long term strategies to empower themselves for the development of REDD activities<sup>12</sup>.

Additionally, several projects have been implemented by national governments and international NGOs to build capacity for indigenous peoples and local communities to participate in community forest management for carbon mitigation. Some examples include:

- In New Zealand, Maori own significant amounts of forested lands. In 2007, the government of New Zealand consulted the Maori about the development of its emissions trading scheme. Based on these consultations, several initiatives to involve Maori in forestry based mitigation initiatives were undertaken. The “Permanent Forest Sink” initiative offers the opportunity for Maori and other New Zealand land owners to earn Kyoto Protocol “assigned amount units” for the establishment of permanent forests in which harvesting restrictions are enforced.<sup>13</sup>
- In Oaxaca, Mexico, a project funded by the Inter-American Foundation supported ten indigenous communities to improve their capacity to manage natural resources sustainably and to increase income by providing environmental services, including carbon capture and biodiversity conservation.<sup>14</sup>

By supporting and building capacity for community forestry and local management of forests, governments can ensure that indigenous peoples and local communities are fully involved with REDD and that the benefits of REDD reach those who are most dependent on forests for their livelihoods.

#### ***4. Capacity-building for indigenous peoples and local communities:***

Indigenous peoples and local communities have consistently requested that they should be included in all aspects of planning and implementing REDD related activities at all levels of governance (in the international system, national governments, and locally). There is a general need for capacity building and information sharing with indigenous peoples and local communities on all aspects of climate change governance, bearing in mind limitations related to access to technology and language and the need to make information available in local languages and through low-tech mechanisms, such as community-based radio.

In order for indigenous peoples and local communities to benefit from opportunities to participate in monitoring of forest degradation, several elements must be in place, including:

- Capacity-building to assist national governments in setting up community-based forest systems;
- Adequate compensation for indigenous peoples’ and local communities’ participation in research and monitoring, and adequate governance structures, including ownership of the data;

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<sup>12</sup> [http://www.unutki.org/default.php?doc\\_id=17](http://www.unutki.org/default.php?doc_id=17)

<sup>13</sup> UNU-IAS, 2008, *Emissions Trading, Carbon Financing and Indigenous Peoples*.

<sup>14</sup> [www.iaf.gov](http://www.iaf.gov)

- Capacity-building for indigenous peoples and local communities to conduct forest inventories and monitor carbon stocks, and to develop proposals to the private sector and financial organizations to pursue future opportunities for carbon monitoring.

The impacts of climate change have been felt more quickly in the Arctic region than in any other region on earth. Because a high proportion of the population of the Arctic is comprised of indigenous peoples, and because there is a strong tradition of scientific research on climate change in the region, the UNFCCC could encourage transfer of knowledge about successful partnerships between scientific and indigenous knowledge holders from the Arctic to other regions as one mechanism for capacity building. For example, the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, a major scientific study of climate change initiated by the Arctic Council, drew on indigenous environmental knowledge to support its research-based findings.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, scientific monitoring projects in climate change research have drawn on traditional knowledge. For example, one ongoing monitoring project combines observations from remote sensing with local knowledge to monitor changes in sea ice cover.<sup>16</sup>

### ***5. National level capacity building and best practice sharing***

Involving indigenous peoples and local communities in REDD planning and implementation will not only require capacity building for indigenous peoples and local communities, but also for national level management and staff. It is important for those involved with REDD at the national level to be familiar with: 1) the dependence of indigenous peoples and local communities on forests and forest ecosystem services; 2) the interrelationship between forests, traditional knowledge, and local environmental management; and 3) the rights of indigenous peoples as articulated in international agreements, particularly the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Capacity building at the national level might include training and distribution of information on:

- The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
- The right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent;
- The role of traditional knowledge in local environmental management;
- Engaging indigenous peoples and local communities in governance processes, including training in setting up community-based forestry initiatives.<sup>17</sup>

Because incorporating indigenous peoples and local communities into REDD planning, implementation, and monitoring will require the development of new methodologies and best practices, the UNFCCC might also consider requesting Parties to compile best practices that could be shared with other Parties, focusing on:

- Incorporating indigenous peoples and local communities in forest governance and carbon monitoring initiatives; and

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.acia.uaf.edu/>

<sup>16</sup> [http://nsidc.org/research/projects/Meier\\_Baffin\\_Bay.html](http://nsidc.org/research/projects/Meier_Baffin_Bay.html)

<sup>17</sup> UNPFII, 2005. Engaging Indigenous Peoples in Governance Processes: International Legal and Policy Frameworks for Engagement. [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/engagement\\_background\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/engagement_background_en.pdf)

- Capacity-building to support indigenous peoples and local communities to successfully participate in REDD initiatives, including facilitating indigenous-to-indigenous transfer of knowledge about REDD monitoring.

#### ***6. Incorporating indigenous peoples and local communities into the work of the UNFCCC***

The Convention on Biological Diversity views indigenous peoples and local communities as essential partners in achieving the goals of the Convention. As such, the CBD has implemented enhanced participation mechanisms for indigenous peoples and local communities. For example, Article 8(j) of the Convention, which addresses traditional knowledge about biodiversity, has developed enhanced opportunities for indigenous peoples and local communities to speak at relevant meetings, and has established a voluntary fund to help fund participation of indigenous peoples and local communities at CBD meetings of interest to them.

Because indigenous peoples and local communities have expressed a strong interest in participating in UNFCCC meetings pertaining to REDD, and because the implementation of REDD will certainly impact communities that are dependent on forests, the UNFCCC could consider similar mechanisms to engage indigenous peoples and local communities in an ongoing basis in meetings and decision-making processes related to REDD.