The Non-carbon Benefits of Forests

biocultural conservation approaches of Indigenous and local communities

as non-market based approaches to conserve and enhance the carbon and non-carbon benefits of forests for climate mitigation and adaptation

a report by the Indigenous Peoples Biocultural Climate Change Assessment Initiative
May 2013
Summary

The distinction between the role of forests in climate change mitigation and the role of forests in climate change adaptation is a very artificial one. Forest conservation, per definition, contributes to both. Forests also contribute both carbon and non-carbon benefits. In fact, the non-carbon benefits of forests are economically, socially, ecologically, culturally and spiritually far more important that the so-called ‘carbon benefits’.

The Indigenous Peoples Biocultural Climate Change Assessment Initiative is an initiative by a coalition of Indigenous peoples’ organizations from all over the world to conduct a participatory, community-driven assessment of how the resilience of the biocultural conservation approaches of Indigenous Peoples is impacted by climate change, and what adaptive strategies can be developed to enhance this resilience. The initiative has contributed significantly to enhancing the adaptation capacity of Indigenous communities in 11 different countries, including forest-dependent communities in Ecuador, Panama, Nicaragua, Thailand, India and the Philippines. Currently, the initiative focuses on empowering forest-dependent indigenous communities to undertake biocultural analysis of climate change mitigation in forests to build resilient forests and territories, producing information and proposals to reframe the REDD debate.

The initial results of these assessment processes demonstrate that traditional forest-related knowledge and the biocultural conservation approaches of Indigenous communities do not only contribute significantly to enhancing the carbon and non-carbon benefits of forests, but they also contribute to integrated joint mitigation and adaptation policies in which forest conservation plays a crucial role.

An Indigenous Biocultural System is a complex system that integrates human and socio-cultural elements of indigenous people with physical and environmental elements of their territories. Its components include biological resources, ranging from micro scales (genetic) to macro scales (Landscape), as well as the traditions and practices that have long existed, also known as “traditional knowledge”, including those related to adaptation to complex ecosystems and the sustainable use of biodiversity. Local economies and customary
laws and institutions are also included.\textsuperscript{1}

These biocultural approaches are ecosystem-based, rather than market-based. They do not aim to “sell” the “environmental services” of forests. Markets in ‘environmental services’ are incompatible with Indigenous worldviews. As recognized by for example the Coalition of Rainforest Nations, Indigenous peoples have an ‘intrinsic’ relationship with tropical forests.\textsuperscript{2} Indigenous communities see their lands, cultures, livelihoods and forests as one holistic universe, of which they are an integral part. This holistic worldview is incompatible with a deductive approach that divides the integral functioning of ecosystems into separate ‘services’ that can be commodified, privatized, and sold.

“In the Kuna cosmovision everything is interconnected, everything is in movement, nature is only a component within a much larger and complex system. Everyone has a space and time, and a function within this complex system…. The Indigenous Biocultural Kuna system refers to a complex system formed by interdependent parts. The components include biological and non-biological resources that vary from micro to macro, as well as traditions, ancestral practices, territorial, and community management. In general, it represents a reciprocal relation between indigenous peoples and their environment”.

As the Declaration by members of the Indigenous Peoples Biocultural Climate Change Assessment to the 11\textsuperscript{th} Conference of the Parties of the Un Framework Convention on Climate Change states: “We, the Indigenous Peoples denounce the serious situation we are facing; the harmonious relationship between humans and Mother Earth has been broken. The life of people and Pachamama has become a business. Life, for Indigenous Peoples, is sacred, and we therefore consider REDD+ and the carbon market a hypocrisy which will not impact global warming. For us, everything is life, and life cannot be negotiated or sold on a stock market, this is a huge risk and will not resolve the environmental crisis.”

We thus call on Governments to recognize and support the biocultural conservation approaches of Indigenous communities as an important non-market based approach to conserving and enhancing the carbon and non-carbon benefits of forests, including their role in climate change mitigation and adaptation.

\textsuperscript{1}IPCCA, 2011. See http://www.scribd.com/doc/76400652/IPCCA-Local-Assessment-Toolkit-Eng
\textsuperscript{2} Submission by Bangladesh, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo (Republic), Costa Rica*, Cote d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Fiji, Gabon, Ghana, Guyana, Honduras, Kenya, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Suriname and Uganda on Views on modalities and procedures for financing results-based actions and considering activities related to decision 1/CP.16, paragraphs 68–70 and 72, as requested by the Conference of the Parties at its seventeenth session in FCCC/AWGLCA/2012/MISC.3
\textsuperscript{3} Andreve for IPCCA, 2011
1. The Non-carbon Benefits of Forests

The role of forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation is broadly recognized, but discussions in the climate negotiations tend to focus strongly on the so-called carbon benefits of forests, that is, the role of forests in carbon sequestration and storage. Forests also provide an ample range of non-carbon benefits, though, especially to Indigenous Peoples and other forest-dependent peoples. For them, the biodiversity in forests represents economic, social and cultural values, it forms a basis for their health care and education systems, and a foundation for their land and resource rights, and traditional livelihoods.

Forests provide a broad range of livelihood benefits to Indigenous communities. In the Hin Lek Fai Village in Thailand, for example, the nearby forests form an important source of food and medicines, as well as spiritual values and cultural traditions. The village is located in the Chomthong National Forest Reserve which was established in 1970. The area is around 1200-1300 meters above sea level and covers with evergreen hill forest, which are still in healthy condition and are able to provide water, clean air, and other products to the community. Edible plants...
gathered in the forests include Phak Nam (Haw Tu Ploh), How Tee La, Ya Li Daw, Daw Ka Sa, Kler Chi Daw, Khaw Kor Dow, banana flowers, Boh Blee Daw, Paw Sa, Ser Kaw Mue Kha, inner banana stem, Ta Kha La, Pa Ah Daw, Asiatic penny worth, Ki Law Sah, Cha-om, Se Ler Jae Ah Paw, and the Ta Ho Aeh Kha Daw. Some of the wild plants were taken to be planted in the home garden for convenient use. In addition to edible plants, villagers have also collected fruits from the forest, there are around 20 kind of different fruits that villagers like to consume. In addition to foods gathered from forest, the villagers have collected herbal medicines, even though villagers have started using modern medical treatment as well. The most commonly used herbs are Ser Ree Po, Kler Baw, Chui Po Kaw Naw, Ser Kae Bo, Teu Ree Cha, and Po Kuay.

These natural resources have been sustainably managed and used by the villagers, whom apply both traditional and scientific knowledge. There are several areas that the community declared as taboo. These areas are regarded as sacred forests that are restricted to activities that will disturb the ecology, for example, the Deh Mui Beu forest, Da De Doh forest, Thi Kho May forest, and the grave yards. There are only a few species that have been declining, most notably a number of mushroom species, which have suffered from the prohibition of traditional rotational farming practices. As a result of this prohibition, there are no lumber or logs for mushrooms to germinate.4

In their submission to the UNFCCC in March 2012, the Least Developed Countries point out rightfully that “the recognition of the LDC communities’ high dependency on forests for their daily livelihoods, food, shelter, energy and medicines must be considered fully in the REDD+.”5 Likewise, in its submission in 2011, India stresses that “carbon service from forest and plantations is one of the co-benefits and not the main or the sole benefit” and that “in India’s context, the forest will not be managed for ‘carbon services’ alone, but for all the ecosystem services that are flowing to the local community from the forest.”6 It should be pointed out in this respect that in practice the forestry policy of the Government of India is strongly focused on

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4 Rapee-jaemyarat et al. for the IPCCA, 2011

promoting monoculture tree plantations, including on Adivasi lands. These plantations, promoted as part of the Green India Mission, do not provide any of the products, benefits and services that natural forests provide.

The importance of the multiple benefits and values of forests is underscored by members of the Savara tribe in India as well. In their assessment report they documented how forests provide the villagers with an extensive variety of fruits and vegetables, including tubers, chilies, papayas, tamarind, and mangos, and with medicinal plants, wood, and insects.

Forests also play a very important spiritual role in the tribe’s culture. “The relation to the forest is sacred. The villagers express that if we grow food crops, then we and the animals of the forest are fed. We take care of the forest as she takes care of us. If we have land, we have forests, we have crops, we have festivals – and this is the relationship between forests and our Savara tribe. We have a place in the forests and pray to the forest gods, and then we collect the produce. Our elders tell us we cultivate these crops, never forget them and how to grow them. We will never leave our forest. Our ancestors are in the forest, we worship them and we buried them there and we cannot leave the forests and leave our ancestors there and we cannot leave their spirits there alone.”

The members of the tribe also emphasize how the trees of the forest are collectively managed and owned, and that the fruits of the tamarind tree, for example, are collected together and distributed amongst the entire communities. Likewise, individual community members are allowed to collect young coconuts, but once the coconuts are ripe they are collected together and the oil is distributed to the entire community. According to customary law, the trees that grow wild in the forests are collectively managed and those fruits are collectively shared, while the fruits of trees

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7 Anthra, Adivasi Aikya Vedika and Yakshi for IPCC, 2011
that are planted by individuals are not collectively owned. This also implies that if natural forests are replaced by plantation, these communal governance systems are undermined, as the fruits of those planted trees are supposed to belong to the individual who planted it only. This destroys the collective community relationship to the trees.\(^8\)

The non-carbon benefits of forests play an important role in climate change mitigation and adaptation as well. Forests play an important role in the regulation of rain patterns, including at the regional and even global level. It is also well known that forests play a key role in adaptation strategies.

As the submission of Bolivia on REDD finance cautions REDD+ “...is intended to separately both mitigation and adaptation issues, and has not fully considered the possibilities to embrace the integral management of forests as systems of life and forest’ landscapes that generate sustainable landscape dynamics. It is considered that this alternative vision of forests and the social organization of forest dependent people constitute fundamental elements for the development of forest governance systems which have the objective of creating sustainable, climate friendly and resilient economies while meeting peoples’ needs for food, fiber and energy.”\(^9\)

2. Indigenous Biocultural Approaches and Buen Vivir as a Non-market, Integrated Approach to Forests and Resilience

The IPCCA initiative supports local assessments of the resilience of the biocultural approaches of Indigenous communities in communities all over the world, including in forest-dependent communities in Ecuador, Panama, Nicaragua, the Philippines, Thailand and India. It has found that the resilience of a linked socio-ecological system depends on its ability to undergo change and retain the same controls on function and structure, to reorganize in the face of perturbations and to build and increase capacity for learning and adaptation. Indigenous resilience builds on the generic resilience concept, but adds a cultural and spiritual dimension providing focus on the ability of indigenous biocultural systems to adapt and support buen vivir (“good life”).

The concept of Buen Vivir lies at the heart of the biocultural approaches of Indigenous Peoples to conserve and restore forests and enhance their own resilience. Buen vivir reaches beyond the restricted western vision of well-being, rejecting dichotomies of underdeveloped and developed, and notions of poverty as the lack of material goods and wealth as a life of abundance. Social improvement is a process that recognizes the interconnected nature of the world, necessarily requiring multiple ways of knowing, including the possibility of continued modernization and use of valuable technological advances.

\(^8\) Anthra, Adivasi Aikya Vedika and Yakshi for IPCCA, 2011  
\(^9\) Submission by the Plurinational State of Bolivia on the Development of the joint Mitigation and Adaptation Mechanism for the Integral and Sustainable Management of Forests. In FCCC/AWGLCA/2012/MISC.3
Key aspects of the concept include:
- Ability to maintain a reciprocal relationship with the parts of the holistic world through ethically and spiritually appropriate practices for an intercultural engagement with society and Mother Earth (nature)
- Enhancing biocultural diversity through continued local interaction with ecosystems
- Acknowledging and respecting different ways of knowing in the world through collective processes
- Social improvement as a process of constant construction and reproduction (from this point of view, development is viewed as a creative way of existing and acting in the world)
- Livelihoods approach as a process of nurturing biological, human and spiritual needs within a safe community with freedom and opportunities
- Freedom to plan and execute life plans according to local innovation and visions of development and future goals; self determined development
- Deliberative democracy and participatory/inclusionary processes

By combining and building epistemological bridges between Western scientific knowledge and traditional knowledge it aims to enhance the biocultural practices of Indigenous communities without undermining their cultural and spiritual value systems and governance structures. It also aims to inform international policy debates of the rich patrimony of the traditional ecosystem management-related knowledge of hundreds of generations of Indigenous women and men.

It is important to underscore the role of women in biocultural conservation systems that contribute to community resilience. The Adivasi society in India, for example, is characterized by a spirit of collectivism, cooperation and sharing, where women have shared an equal position with men. For Adivasis, the intrinsic elements of resilience include territoriality, customary law, systems of governance, livelihood practices and the way they use the forest, land and water. It also includes culture and spirituality which includes the relationship with the gods, goddesses and ancestors. In all these elements Adivasi women play a critical and powerful role, which strengthens the resilience of the tribe. Women are highly knowledgeable about their village forests. They know where to collect and gather tubers, wild vegetables, medicines, trees, roots, fruits, materials to construct their homes, fodder for their animals, and fuel wood. Women also have a close understanding of the entire landscape and its interaction with the climate: the forests, the land, the soil, the water, the living creatures, the air, the clouds. Through their stories, songs, art
forms, dances and festivals the tribes memories and history are passed on to the next generations.10

Indigenous resilience is an emergent property of the multiple interactions and historical processes of change and adaptation. Indigenous knowledge systems provide frameworks for visualizing current states and trends within long-term coevolutionary relationships, with vision and creativity for proactive adaptation. Self-determination and collective identity are integral parts of building resilience from within, while engaging with the interconnected world. The IPCCA initiative has distinguished 4 key elements of Indigenous resilience: Collective Memory, Adaptation, Agrobiodiversity, Self determination and Traditional Institutions

### Elements of Indigenous Resilience

- **Collective Memory**: Resilient biocultural systems have developed due to historical processes of interactions among all of the elements in the holistic world producing a unique local mosaic of life. The historical process is encoded in collective memory providing a long-term view of uncertainty and change; and climate change is one of many processes of change that indigenous peoples have historically dealt with. Buen vivir is also developed through an ongoing process. Collective memory provides local frameworks for managing ongoing change, including climate change, to support buen vivir.

- **Adaptation** in the socio-ecological resilience literature is the process by which system function and structure is maintained, and the capability of a system to maintain itself in the face of a presented change or impact. In contrast to the common view of adaptation, in an indigenous view of resilience, adaptation is not only undertaken as a reaction to a change that has been enforced on the system, but is also a positive process of being creative and engaging with the world while looking towards the future to maintain buen vivir; in this process, a desired, self-determined future is carved out. Indigenous knowledge systems provide awareness of changes (for example changes in the ecosystems) for adaptation as well as vision for proactively and creatively engaging with the world moving towards the future. Local knowledge systems, through narratives and the practice of rituals provide frameworks for visioning and ongoing engagement that can enhance buen vivir through adaptation.

- **Agrobiodiversity**: The historical process of continued local interactions between indigenous peoples and the ecosystems they inhabit has produced areas of high agrobiodiversity. Their biocultural diversity is at once the product of historical adaptation and the resource of future adaptive potential. An indigenous resilience focus necessitates and enables a local endogenous focus for adaptation to climate change based on biocultural diversity.

- **Self determination**: The indigenous call for a right to self determination and autonomous management of their ancestral territories is also a call for maintaining and enhancing resilience for improved adaptive capacity, using their own worldview and processes. This continues to be a struggle for many indigenous peoples whose rights have not been honored. The indigenous resilience concept therefore includes political dimensions that tie into the international indigenous struggles.

- **Traditional Institutions**: An indigenous world is a collective world, made up of embedded social levels. Resilience that supports buen vivir therefore is a collective property, built and created by all, and shared and enjoyed by all. Indigenous resilience depends on communities being able to practice collective governance based on their collective identity, facilitating buen vivir. Indigenous institutions and governance structures that facilitate endogenous development processes have historically been weakened through colonization and ongoing political structures, and are a potential weak spot for local resilience. They provide an important focus when assessing the impacts of drivers of climate change for they are the source of local adaptive strategies.

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10 Anthra, Adivasi Aikya Vedika and Yakshi for IPCC, 2011
The Sápara People, a transboundary, bi-national people who live in both Ecuador and Peru, are a clear example of Indigenous resilience. It is estimated that there are approximately 900 Sápara of which only 200 live in Ecuador. Traditionally, the Sápara were a semi-nomadic people, but because of the influence of haciendas and missions they have settled in more permanent villages in recent decades. The Sápara Nationality manages the homeland and it’s natural resources sustainably according to ancestral rules and norms. The Sápara territory covers 271,000 hectares of intact tropical moist forest, and is among the most biologically rich areas on the planet. The Sápara hunt, fish and gather only what each family needs, without harming the ecological balance of the forest. No soil degradation is caused by their horticulture, nor do they cut down many trees. Their lifestyle maintains the balance between humans and nature. The Sápara want to manage the territory according to their traditional rules and regulations. One of the greatest challenges for the nationality is that the territory is not yet fully demarcated. Since the 1970’s, there have been land conflicts because settlers, as well as Kichwa and Achuar hunters, foray into Sápara territory to acquire resources. At present, only 54,000 hectares of Sápara territory have been demarcated and a hunting reserve has been zoned.\footnote{Ashiñwaka for IPCC, 2011}

Another, more recent challenge is formed by the SocioBosque program. The SocioBosque program is a climate change mitigation project implemented by the Ecuadorian Government that began in 2008 and consists of annual economic remuneration to communities, or their representative organizations, for not deforesting their lands. As part of the program, the state performs a technical evaluation of the quality of the biodiversity of the rainforest and calculates the quantity of carbon captured by this forest. Once the evaluation has been done, the
state will negotiate the sale of carbon credits with carbon markets, or receive funds from the United Nations' REDD+ program.

In 2009, leadership of the Sápara’s representative organization, NAZAE, signed a Socio-Bosque contract with the Ecuadorian State whereby economic resources were allocated that were supposed to be used for the benefit of the communities. Unfortunately, there was no consultation process, and the communities are not aware of the sum that NAZAE’s leaders are to receive and redistribute, nor the benefits and investment plans that were agreed upon with the Ministry of the Environment. As a result, the communities feel that the way that the program is being implemented is in grave violation of their rights, because their right to free, prior informed consent has not been respected. The area of land covered by the contract is 80,000 hectares. The Sápara feel that the SocioBosque contract ignores the cultural content of their territory. There is no recognition of their knowledge, the work they have done to care for the territory for thousands of years, nor of the spiritual value of the forest.

The resources allocated by the Ministry to NAZAE, whose headquarters are in Puyo, have not been channeled to the communities, which are the real protectors of the territory and the forest. Sápara women have pointed out that the majority of the Sápara leaders are men who go to the city to carry out their work in offices. These men are the only ones getting money from SocioBosque. Meanwhile, the women have not participated in the planning or implementation of the project, and have received nothing.

The SocioBosque project has begun to generate conflicts between NAZAE’s leadership and Sápara communities. The communities demand participation, direct benefits and respect for the traditional use of the territory and its resources in all agreements signed by NAZAE. At the same time, they denounce the state’s lack of transparency for having not duly informed how the environmental service of the
carbon sequestration of the forest is being negotiated, what benefits the state will receive, nor how the benefits will be shared with communities.  

3. A Non-market Based Approach to Conserving Forests

The case of the Sápara is illustrative for some of the conflicts that can be triggered by market-based approaches to forest conservation, especially if those approaches do not take into account the non-carbon benefits of forests, the rights and autonomous governance structures of Indigenous Peoples and the role and rights of women related to forest conservation. As some countries have pointed out: “... even in the national level, REDD laws are premature and issues concerning different stakeholders, including indigenous people, have not been addressed sufficiently. This could only lead to the commercialization of forests and leading the indigenous people and civil societies to an unconsented future. This on its own is a clear violation of article 19 of the UNDRIP.”

Indigenous Biocultural Systems of conserving forests have proven to provide a broad range of non-carbon and carbon benefits to local communities as well as integrated climate change mitigation and adaptation policies. These systems are ecosystem-based rather than market-based. Market-based approaches that aim to quantify, commodify, privatize and sell carbon as a specific ‘environmental service’ of forests are not only at odds with the spiritual value systems of Indigenous Peoples, which consider the carbon benefits of forests as one element of a holistic, integral system of which they themselves are part, but they also lead to conflicts and elite resource capture, including at the local level.

Rather than trying to integrate the many values of forests in global ‘environmental services’ markets, there is a clear need for new non-market based approaches that provide legal and political recognition and support to Indigenous territories and that enhance the resilience of the autonomous governance structures and traditional management practices of Indigenous communities.

The Indigenous Peoples Biocultural Climate Change Assessment Initiative has build up a unique experience with assessing and enhancing the resilience of Indigenous biocultural conservation practices. By applying participatory, emancipating assessment methodologies that combine western science with traditional knowledge, the initiative has strengthened the capacity of Indigenous communities.

12 Ashiñwaka for IPCC, 2011
13 Views of Saudi Arabia on modalities and procedures for financing results-based actions and considering activities related to decision 1/CP.16, paragraphs 68-70 and 72.
themselves to assess the impacts of climate change, and the ways in which the resilience of their own conservation practices and ‘buen vivir’ can be enhanced as a contribution to both climate change adaptation, and mitigation.

4. Recommendations

We call upon the Parties to the UNFCCC to elaborate pro-active policies that support local non-market based approaches to forest conservation. Specifically, we recommend governments to:

- Support Indigenous-driven Biocultural Systems and integrated climate change mitigation and adaptation approaches that are ecosystem-based rather than market-based, and that respect and foster the intrinsic, reciprocal relationships between Indigenous peoples, their territories, their autonomous governance structures and their spiritual value systems.

- Support technologies that are based on traditional knowledge as well as western science and that embrace and build upon rather than undermine the successful and culturally and socially appropriate natural resource management methodologies that Indigenous women and men have developed over many generations;

- Support and respect the autonomous governance institutions of Indigenous Peoples, respecting their rights to self-determination as stipulated in ILO Convention 169 and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. As explained above, Indigenous resilience depends on communities being able to practice collective governance based on their collective identity, facilitating _buen vivir_;

- Develop and support policies that are not only subject to the right the Free Prior and Informed Consent of Indigenous peoples and their right to participate fully and effectively in the development and implementation of any policies that may impact on their lands and territories, but also reflect their own endogenous sustainable livelihood aspirations, as conceptualized through the term ‘Buen Vivir’.

We also call upon Parties to provide further support to global initiatives to assess and enhance the resilience of these successful biocultural conservation approaches in times of global change.

“There is considerable accumulated evidence that supports the argument that traditional, local uses of forest as systems of life are climate friendly, and economically, culturally, and socially viable options that have high potential impacts on poverty reduction in rural areas. These traditional uses of forests maintain a high potential for adaptation to global warming with changes in temperature and
precipitation becoming increasingly pronounced.”

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ANNEX

14 Submission by the Plurinational State of Bolivia on the Development of the joint Mitigation and Adaption Mechanism for the Integral an Sustainable Management of Forests. In FCCC/AWGLCA/2012/MISC.3
The participants of the workshop on REDD and Biocultural Protocols organized by the Indigenous Peoples Biocultural Climate Change Assessment (IPCCA), from Ecuador, Panama, India, Nicaragua, Peru and Samoa met on 24 and 25 November 2011 in Durban, South Africa to share emergent findings and analyse how REDD is affecting our territories in order to respond through our assessments. We discussed strategies for addressing climate justice.

We, the Indigenous Peoples, denounce the serious situation we are facing; the harmonious relationship between humans and Mother Earth has been broken. The life of people and Pachamama has become a business. Life, for Indigenous Peoples, is sacred, and we therefore consider REDD+ and the carbon market a hypocrisy which will not impact global warming. For us, everything is life, and life cannot be negotiated or sold on a stock market, this is a huge risk and will not resolve the environmental crisis.

Through our discussions and dialogue we identified the following inherent risks and negative impacts of REDD+, which we alert the world to:

1. REDD+ is a neo-liberal, market-driven approach that leads to the commodification of life and undermines holistic community values and governance. It is a neo-liberal approach driven by economic processes such as trade liberalization and privatization and by actors like the World Bank whom have been responsible for the destruction of forests and livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples all over the world. The concept of “Green Economy” is a vehicle for promoting trends of commodification of nature. It is a vehicle to impose neo-liberal environmental strategies on developing countries, which undermines traditional communal land tenure systems. Indigenous Peoples have well-performing and self-sufficient economies, but these economies are ignored. Indigenous Peoples have used their wisdom for thousands of years to manage forests in a way that cannot be quantified and is priceless. Meanwhile, Northern countries and their economic policies have destroyed the climate and planet and, therefore, have a significant ecological debt to pay.

2. REDD+ policies and projects are directly targeting Indigenous Peoples and their territories, as this is where the remaining forests are found. Corporations, conservation organizations and powerful state agencies will capture the benefits by grabbing forest land and reaching unfair and manipulated agreements with forest-dwelling indigenous peoples. REDD+ is triggering conflicts, corruption, evictions and other human rights violations. Calculating how much carbon is stored in forests (monitoring, reporting and verification) is a very complicated and expensive process, and indigenous knowledge is being ignored within it. As a result, the overwhelming majority of REDD+ funding will end up in the hands of consultants, NGOs and carbon brokers like the World Bank.

3. Indigenous Peoples and local communities use their own governance systems, which include laws, rules, institutions and practices, to manage their forests and territories, many of which are implicit and part of oral or otherwise unwritten traditions. REDD+ policies and projects are undermining and violating indigenous governance systems. Through developing REDD+ readiness programs national Governments are creating new institutions, which will further concentrate control over forests into the hands of State institutions, and violate the rights and autonomy of Indigenous Peoples. These new institutions, however, fail to address the drivers of forest loss.

4. REDD+ locks up forests, blocking access and customary use of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to their forests. This impacts negatively on traditional forest-related knowledge, food sovereignty and food security, and traditional health care systems, which are lost as communities are manipulated or forced to sell their rights to access and use of their forests.

DECLARATION OF MEMBERS OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES’ BIOCULTURAL CLIMATE CHANGE ASSESSMENT (IPCCA) INITIATIVE ON REDD

Durban, South Africa, November 26th

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5. The drivers of forest loss and forestland grabbing will not be addressed by REDD+. Governments that are elaborating REDD+ policies are also promoting economic sectors such as cattle ranching, bio-energy, mining, oil exploration and agro-industrial monocultures that, ironically, are the main drivers of forest loss. In countries like Ecuador, governments are promoting massive oil exploration schemes in forest-protected areas.

6. The focus on carbon in REDD+ policies promotes the establishment of monoculture tree plantations, including genetically modified trees, and ignores the social and cultural values of forests. Institutions like the Forest Stewardship Council legitimize this trend by certifying plantation establishment as ‘sustainable forest management’. Corporations take over lands that, within shifting cultivation systems, are fallow, and destroy them through tree plantation establishment. In a country like India, REDD+ is becoming a tree plantation expansion program that triggers land grabbing on a massive scale, undermining the Forest Rights Act.

7. National biodiversity and carbon-offset schemes, especially in large countries like India and Brazil are a vehicle for implementing REDD+. Large polluting corporations, such as mining and dam companies, are allowed to compensate the environmental damage they cause by planting trees. Indigenous Peoples and local communities suffer two-fold; they suffer from the environmental damage caused by their pollution, as well as from the negative impacts of projects that compensate them. Furthermore, conservation organizations profit from such compensation projects, and will thus be tempted to turn a blind eye on the negative impacts of such industries.

8. Due to problems with reference levels, leakage, permanence, monitoring, reporting and verification, problems which policy makers are not inclined and unable to solve, REDD+ is undermining the climate regime. REDD+ violates the principle of common but differentiated responsibility. It creates major inequities and grants the right to pollute to developed countries and their industries. Climate change is today one of the biggest threats to the lives and livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples, and for that reason, false solutions such as REDD+ form a direct threat to the survival of Indigenous Peoples.

REDD+ threatens the survival of Indigenous Peoples. We emphasize that the inherent risks and negative impacts cannot be addressed through safeguards or other remedial measures. We insist that all actors involved in REDD+ fully respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples, in particular, the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). We caution, however, that adherence to the principle of FPIC is not a means to solve these negative impacts and this principle should not be used to justify REDD+. The right of self-determination of Indigenous Peoples should not be used to justify the destruction of our territories. Indigenous peoples should not commit themselves to a process that does not respect them. We denounce the hypocrisy of REDD+ and the many false financial promises that have been made. REDD+ is a market-based approach through which outside actors try to commodify what is sacred to Indigenous peoples: the heritage of our ancestors and the guarantee of life for future generations, not just Indigenous Peoples, but for all of humanity. Many Indigenous Peoples and communities are not aware of the threats and impacts of REDD+, which is a political trap, and will lead to enhancing climate change. We call upon these communities to maintain their integrity in this respect.

We call upon all people committed to climate justice to support life, and we implore the global community to take responsibility for reducing emission of greenhouse gases at the source and to reject REDD+ as a false solution that breeds a new form of climate racism.