2016

Sep

RECOGNIZING TROPICAL FOREST GUARDIANS

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Indigenous people (IP) and traditional communities (TC) have been living in and around tropical forests for millennia. By using their lands in sustainable ways, and holding the line against chainsaws and bulldozers, they have made important contributions to climate change mitigation, keeping carbon in tropical forest trees and out of the atmosphere. And therein lies the irony—it is at least partly because of their long tradition of stewardship of their forest homes that climate change finance designed to reduce tropical forest destruction has been slow to reach IP and TC. If they are already protecting their forests, climate funds are better spent elsewhere, the logic goes. In our new report, we show that benefits from climate finance are beginning to reach IP and TC in important ways and that the stage is set for this trend to multiply in the near future. A global mechanism that is part of the UN Paris Agreement on climate change is compensating regions that reduce deforestation and forest degradation (called "REDD+"). In some important cases, REDD+ is delivering benefits to IP and TC and helping to secure their long-standing claims on territorial rights. However, these initiatives are still far from adequate in addressing the diverse needs and aspirations of forest dwelling people in a holistic way. We show how these important initial success stories can be multiplied, improving the livelihoods of forest stewards while keeping the carbon of tropical forest trees out of the atmosphere through a jurisdictional approach. Increasing REDD+ Benefits To Indigenous Peoples and Traditional Communities Through a Jurisdictional Approach, by Earth Innovation Institute and several of our partners in the Sustainable Tropics Alliance and the Forest Based Livelihoods Consortium seeks to answer the question of *how indigenous peoples and traditional communities can be better integrated into climate change mitigation strategies, receive more benefits for their efforts, and have more control over how those benefits are applied?* The report, representing two years of research by five organizations (Earth Innovation Institute, Instituto del Bien Común, Inobu, Prisma, and ProNatura Sur) explores ways to increase the share of REDD+ benefits flowing to forest guardians through a jurisdictional approach, and examines the progress being made towards climate-smart and people-friendly development across 13 tropical regions in Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Mesoamerica and Indonesia. The jurisdictional approach to REDD+ differs from project-based REDD+ in that it aims to scale-up forest conservation and restoration initiatives that result in emissions reductions, and distribute benefits from jurisdiction-wide emissions reductions across multiple land users within an entire landscape. While project–based REDD+ strives to support IP and TC one community at a time, jurisdictional REDD+ seeks to systemically overcome the challenges faced by these communities across entire states or provinces, leveraging climate finance to increase support for sustainable livelihoods, improved services for health and better infrastructure. Benefit-sharing models within the

jurisdictional approach must be based on real needs - financial and non-financial; enable indigenous and traditional communities to implement community-led development (for example, through Life Plans); and should be representative, flexible and accountable. For example, Norwegian REDD+ funds in Peru are helping secure territorial rights for *comunidades nativas* thereby addressing persistent obstacles faced by IP and TC due to insecure tenure rights. Jurisdictional REDD+ can support systemic change by securing a seat at the table for IP and TC when government decision-making is taking place. Our report explores ways in which IP and TC currently participate in decision-making processes, from emerging formal spaces for participation in Mexico to existing and proposed partnerships between state governments and IP in Brazil. “For forest conservation initiatives to be sustainable over time they must establish direct relationships with those protecting the forests. This can help to have greater impacts and more benefits, not just for forests but also for people. It is indigenous peoples and local communities who have fought to protect tropical forests in Mesoamerica, the Amazon and other regions of the world and therefore there must be a formal integration of our proposals into diverse forest conservation initiatives", Cándido Mezua, Secretary of International Relations of the Mesoamerican Alliance of Peoples and forests (AMPB). By bringing more and diverse benefits to forest guardians and broadening participation in climate change dialogues, jurisdictional REDD+ provides a framework for recognizing and rewarding communities for their efforts to protect tropical forests. *Increasing REDD+ Benefits To Indigenous Peoples and Traditional Communities Through a Jurisdictional Approach, was underwritten by Forest Trends, NORAD, and USAID and is available for download in English, Spanish and Portuguese.*