

# THE SUSTAINABLE TROPICS ALLIANCE

## FOSTERING LOW-EMISSION RURAL DEVELOPMENT FROM THE GROUND UP

### ARE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION AT ODDS IN THE TROPICS?

- The impacts of climate change are and will be most acutely felt by rural populations dependent on ecosystem goods and services to meet a broad range of their needs
- In the Tropics, conversion of native vegetation to pasture and croplands is a double-edged sword: it is a way for people to secure or improve their livelihoods, but also a source of 1/6 to 1/5 of global greenhouse gas emissions
- Tropical regions face an increasing complex challenge: How can societies successfully advance rural development in a way that tends to local and regional well-being while also meeting their expanded role in terms of climate change and food security?

### WHY LOW-EMISSION RURAL DEVELOPMENT? A FRAMEWORK FOR LARGE-SCALE, BOTTOM-UP SOLUTIONS

- Top-down strategies for slowing deforestation and reducing greenhouse gas emissions are failing to penetrate regional development strategies and improve well-being
- Innovative, holistic approaches are needed that integrate climate change mitigation and adaptation goals with the concerns for human well-being that are at the heart of sustainable development agendas
- Solutions to deforestation, fisheries depletion and other challenges must be anchored in local cultures, economies, policies, and business models
- Low-emission rural development (LED-R) is sustainable development, with an eye towards climate change
- The Sustainable Tropics Alliance was created to foster this new type of rural development

## CHARACTERISTICS OF LED-R

- Climate stability is an explicit goal
- Encompasses heterogeneous regions or jurisdictions (natural or political)
- Engages key actors through multi-sector, participatory, and bottom-up approaches
- Transforms systems & institutions for governing natural resources
- Empowers local institutions to drive positive change



PILLARS OF LED-R AND POTENTIAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

## THE SUSTAINABLE TROPICS ALLIANCE

The Sustainable Tropics Alliance is a strategic partnership of independent, non-governmental organizations that draws on research, multi-stakeholder engagement, and local knowledge to improve rural livelihoods through LED-R in key regions of the Tropics. Alliance members include the Earth Innovation Institute (Brazil, Indonesia, Colombia), Pronatura-Sur (Mexico), the Instituto del Bien Común (Peru), the Instituto de Pesquisa Ambiental da Amazônia (Brazil), Green Belt Movement (Kenya) and the Foundation for International Environmental Law & Development.



## FIVE PILLARS of Low-Emission Rural Development define progress toward LED-R

### SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Critical lever to tip business-as-usual economic growth towards a LED-R model
- LED-R must provide positive incentives for sustainable land and resource use
- Implies more equitable distribution of economic benefits to rural populations

### HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS

- Integral to reducing emissions and to well-being of millions dependent on ecosystem goods and services
- Tropical forests are especially important due to high value carbon stocks
- LED-R will catalyze or support healthy, productive and diverse ecosystems

### MANAGEABLE CLIMATE

- Resource degradation threatens climate stability and peoples' ability to mitigate and adapt to climate change
- Lowering emissions from land use change (especially deforestation) is key to managing climate
- Through LED-R climate change mitigation strategies must work in concert with development policies to support human well-being

### EQUITABLE SOCIAL SYSTEMS

- Current resource use may be characterized by competing interests, disjointed policies, lack of enforcement and widespread non-compliance, all favoring dominant actors
- Reconciling the needs and interests of different actors is extremely challenging, yet critical to LED-R
- LED-R seeks to ensure genuine participation of diverse stakeholders, secure rights to resources and boost the governance capacity of local institutions

### HUMAN WELL-BEING

- Existing climate change mitigation strategies have failed to reduce poverty
- Well-being must be central to LED-R and part of a comprehensive policy approach
- Encompasses not only access to land and resources, but also rights to self-determination for individuals and communities

## THE WAY TO LED-R

LED-R must be tailored to local contexts, acknowledging that current development paradigms are a product of specific histories, and interacting cultural, political, economic and biophysical processes. The approach should be evidence-based and participatory: each step should be carried out with multi-stakeholder input, as well as with rigorous research and analysis. The process for designing and implementing LED-R plans at the regional or jurisdictional scales involves six basic steps.



## WHO IS INVOLVED IN LED-R?

All actors have the potential to play a positive role in transforming the current high-emission, "business as usual" model of rural development: governments, financial institutions, large-scale producers and extractors, smallholders, indigenous peoples, traditional communities, and civil society. Therefore, LED-R is explicit in its focus on multi-stakeholder, participatory approaches that empower local actors, especially civil society and typically marginalized actor groups, to drive positive change at scale.

## TOWARDS A GLOBAL MODEL OF LED-R

Dominant rural development paradigms in the tropics must shift towards a more holistic, long term vision for development in order to manage climate change and sustain rural populations. Low-Emission Rural Development is a model-in-progress, merging innovative strategies for lowering GHG emissions from land use change (especially deforestation) and concerns for human wellbeing. The way forward for LED-R presents many challenges, and will require commitments on the part of civil society (beyond the Sustainable Tropics Alliance), governments and the private sector to collectively re-frame a new vision for development in the tropics.

A more detailed presentation of the LED-R model for tropical regions with an analysis of regional case studies will be prepared ahead of the UN Climate Change Conference in Lima, Peru (December 2014). The analysis will also address establishing clear metrics for monitoring progress toward LED-R.

## SUPPORT PROVIDED BY

