



WORLD RAINFOREST MOVEMENT

Halting deforestation?

REDD+ and the protection of the fossil fuels and conservation industry



Indigenous peoples discussing the impacts of climate policies on their territories.
Xapuri (Acre, Brazil), May 2017. Ph: Gerhard Dilger (RLF)

A compilation of articles from the
World Rainforest Movement Bulletin on the
occasion of the Hearing of the California Air Resources Board
on the California Tropical Forest Standard to be held
19-20 September 2019, in California, United States

September 2019

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Resources Board on the California Tropical Forest
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REDD+ is turned from individual projects to programmes that cover whole regions or provinces within a country, to eventually cover whole countries. These new kinds of REDD+ initiatives are often called 'jurisdictional REDD+'. The impacts for communities may well be much the same as from REDD projects: communities are first in line to face restrictions on traditional forest use practises and last in line for receiving meaningful compensation or 'benefits' that REDD+ is supposed to generate for forest-dependent communities. This article looks at what is motivating this change from REDD+ projects to 'jurisdictional' REDD+.

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1. Introduction

California's carbon market: A 'green' pass for the oil and gas industries

The first thing to note about California's emission reduction targets is that they are extremely low. And these low targets are further weakened because companies can achieve them through buying permits to pollute instead of reducing their own emissions. The state of California has been seeking to connect its carbon trading system, now extended until 2030, with jurisdictions. As a result, polluters can keep polluting while vulnerable communities affected by their operations continue suffering aggravated impacts. It is important to recall that major polluters in California – refineries and power plants- are concentrated in communities of colour and low-income communities.

California's carbon market also prevents local air districts from passing regulation on pollution sources covered by it. (1) It is of no surprise that the fossil fuel industry and others spent millions of dollars lobbying to influence California's legislation. (2)

Furthermore, proponents of California's carbon market have been trying to pry open the door for the use of international forest carbon credits by companies covered by the California carbon trading scheme. The latest development in this process is the California Tropical Forest Standard (TFS). A hearing on the draft TFS in November 2018 saw strong opposition to the California Air Resources Board endorsing the standard. Cited were not only technical flaws but also the question of mandate – why would the California Air Resources Board (CARB) engage in developing and endorsing such a standard if not as a preliminary step for opening the door for REDD+ or forest carbon credits into the California carbon trading scheme. Yet, if this is the objective, the CARB has not been honest about that. What mandate or capacity would the CARB have to enforce or even monitor implementation of the standard in other countries or jurisdictions?

The CARB says that the TFS could also be used by other carbon trading programmes such as the International Civil Aviation Organization's Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA). Aviation is one of the sectors with the fastest emissions growth, and CORSIA is designed to greenwash the climate damage that will result from this irresponsible growth projected by the aviation industry. The CARB must not be complicit in this greenwashing of the international aviation industry.

Following the November 2018 Hearing, minor revisions to the TFS were made and the revised standard presented for public comment. A hearing on this revised TFS version will be held by the CARB on 19 / 20 September 2019.

The World Rainforest Movement has followed the history of attempts to open the California carbon market to international REDD+ and forest carbon credits from the beginning. It has supported opposition to these attempts among others by giving visibility to statements from community and indigenous peoples' organisations in regions that were proposed as suppliers of international REDD+ or forest carbon credits to polluting companies in California and by informing those organisations about the state of discussion at the international stage.

This compilation brings together a selection of statements and articles. The statements make direct reference to initially, the proposal to accept outright REDD+ credits into the California carbon trading scheme and now, the 'detour' via the endorsement by the CARB of a Tropical Forest Standard. Articles address the flaws and irreconcilable contradictions and incoherence of REDD+ and explore why no number of revisions or amendments is likely to turn REDD+ into a credible and effective instrument for forest or climate protection.

In May 2017, forest dwellers, rubber tappers and indigenous peoples united in Xapuri, Brazil, and declared that “We express our indignation about the false solutions, which legitimize the continuity and expansion of a socially and environmentally destructive model. We reject initiatives to offset pollution. We do not accept mechanisms based on restrictions on our way of life, and we express solidarity with people living in the areas that are contaminated by companies seeking compensation (offsets). We stand by the people from other countries who live in the areas impacted by the pollution generated by destructive companies. No one should live in contaminated areas; it is time to end all kinds of racism, including environmental racism.” (3) Marcus Franklin, from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, said at the release of a report that accounts for many of the impacts suffered by communities of colour living near oil and gas facilities in the US, that the exposure to pollutants is tied to deeper systemic issues of oppression and poverty, adding, "it is time to shape an energy future that is not exploitative and does not profit from acts of environmental racism." (4)

We call on the California Air Resources Board to
REJECT ENDORSEMENT
of the California Tropical Forest Standard!

The aviation industry must
reduce emissions
NOT offset them!

- (1) Governor Brown: If you care about climate change, stop drilling for oil. REDD is a dangerous distraction, REDD-Monitor, August 2018
- (2) Business spent millions lobbying before cap-and-trade-vote, E&E News, 2017,
- (3) Xapuri Declaration, 2017
- (4) Fumes Across the Fence Lines, NAACP, November 2017

2. Compilation of WRM bulletin articles

From REDD+ projects to 'jurisdictional REDD+': more bad news for the climate and communities

[From WRM Bulletin 231, June 2017](#)

As REDD+ is turned from projects to 'jurisdictional REDD', it may well lead to either stranded private sector REDD+ projects or a high risk of already dodgy reduction claims being counted twice, by the buyer of a REDD+ credit and the jurisdiction involved.

For many people, REDD+ is about projects that save forests. In reality, however, REDD+ has never been about protecting forests and also no longer really is about projects but about programmes covering whole regions or provinces within a country. Though many REDD+ projects continue to exist, causing harm to indigenous peoples and forest communities by restricting their traditional forest use practises. (1)

The idea of REDD+ has its roots in the UN climate negotiations. It was negotiated as a tool that would allow companies and industrialized countries to continue burning petroleum, coal and natural gas while claiming the emissions this causes do not harm the climate. REDD+, its advocates claim, would provide cheap compensation for the release of these emissions into the atmosphere and provide money to finance forest protection. Companies in industrialized countries could burn fossil carbon at home, that is the carbon stored underground for millions of years, and pay someone in a tropical forest country to keep some trees standing as a replacement carbon store. (2)

The truth is that money alone doesn't stop deforestation; that REDD+ isn't tackling the actual causes of large-scale deforestation and that money from the private sector hasn't been forthcoming at any scale. REDD+ advocates who had advertised REDD+ as a triple-win (cheap compensation for fossil fuel burning, extra money for forest conservation and supporting communities who live in and from the forest and contribution to climate protection that can be realized now while technology for move away from fossil fuel is developed) have also had to grudgingly acknowledge that halting deforestation is neither fast nor easy or cheap. Convincing evidence is missing that REDD+ has made a dent in deforestation despite claims to the contrary.

Another motivation behind REDD+ is the intention of industrialized countries to avoid paying the bill for tropical forest protection although a "development" debt remains. Industrialized countries are increasingly transforming 'development aid'

grants into loans and private-public-partnership schemes where the main role of public money is to provide a risk buffer for private capital investments in so-called developing countries. (3) Two reports commissioned by the UK government – the Stern report 2006 and the Eliasch review 2008 – helped governments to claim that ‘private sector capital is needed to save tropical forests because public money alone will not be sufficient’ to cover the supposed cost of reducing deforestation. It was these two reports that established the unfounded claim that reducing emissions from deforestation is cheap, fast and easy.

For international conservation organisations and the World Bank, REDD+ also provides a tool to expand their ‘parks without people’ model of forest conservation and ensures corporate and public funding for their conservation projects and organisational budgets. Conservation NGOs and consultants based in industrialized countries have to date probably received the lion’s share of public money spent on REDD+ in the last ten years. Even though these groups claim to do ‘participatory REDD+’ and ‘community REDD+’ projects, REDD+ is not an idea that originated from communities. REDD+ is also not suitable to address the needs and threats that forest-dependent communities face, as experience has clearly shown during the past ten years. (4) Critics of REDD+, including WRM, have discussed these misconceptions and hidden motivations behind REDD+ many times.

Less has been written about the change of REDD+ from projects to programmes that cover whole regions or provinces within a country. These new kinds of REDD+ initiatives are expected to eventually cover whole countries. They are often called ‘jurisdictional REDD+’ because they will be implemented not just on the land assigned to individual REDD+ projects but across a whole jurisdiction, like a department, a province, a state or a whole country. This article looks at what is motivating this change from projects to ‘jurisdictional’ REDD+.

What is ‘jurisdictional REDD+’?

Because REDD+ is linked to the UN climate negotiations, the UN climate talks also determine what REDD+ looks like. REDD+ initiatives that want to sell their carbon credits to the UN carbon market, will need to comply with the UN climate agreement rules. In reality, pilot programmes such as the World Bank Forest Carbon Partnership Facility and private sector REDD+ projects that already sell carbon credits to companies in the so-called voluntary carbon market, also have a big influence on these rules. Lobbyists from the World Bank and conservation NGOs are present at the UN climate meetings and meet with government officials that decide on the UN’s rules for REDD+.

From 2005, the World Bank, international conservation groups and private companies started to implement REDD+ projects that would be compatible with a mechanism more or less like the Kyoto Protocol’s Clean Development Mechanism: individual projects or clusters of projects in countries without binding emission targets in the global South would sell carbon credits to companies and industrialized countries that have binding emission limits. But the UN Paris Agreement from

2015 turned out very different from the Kyoto Protocol (see also WRM Bulletin 228, January 2017). Under the Paris Agreement on climate change all countries have voluntary emission targets and will be presenting their national greenhouse gas balance sheet to the UN climate convention. These balance sheets will show how far a country has advanced in achieving the target they have set for their country. None of these Paris Agreement targets are binding. (5)

But carbon markets need binding targets, or some kind of pressure to limit emissions to function. The assumption that REDD+ could attract private sector funding if REDD+ projects are able to sell carbon credits in a global carbon market will not work anymore. Limits create the demand, hence: no (binding) limits, no demand for REDD+ credits from a UN carbon market.

Moreover, most tropical forest countries in the global South have included reductions in emissions from deforestation into their national commitments under the Paris Agreement. Therefore, they will have to calculate how much greenhouse gas emissions is happening in their country and present these figures in a national balance sheet. Most tropical countries decided to include emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in this national accounting sheet. And they will have to submit their national 'carbon accounts' regularly to the UN to demonstrate their progress towards the reduction goal they set for themselves (in UN climate language, these goals are called NDCs – nationally determined contributions).

From 2020, when the UN Paris Agreement comes into force, every carbon credit sold by a REDD+ project located in a country that also includes (carbon stored in) forests in its national carbon balance will have to be deducted from the country's national carbon balance sheet. If the credit sold by the project is not deducted from the national balance sheet, there is what in UN climate language is called 'double-counting' because the buyer of the carbon credit will also claim a reduction in his own balance sheet – after all, that is why he bought the REDD+ credit. This means that the emissions look lower on paper than they are in reality. And that in turn increases the risk of dangerous climate change.

Double-counting will be very likely under the Paris Agreement if private sector REDD+ projects continue to sell carbon credits. (6) Even a report by the Gold Standard, a company certifying carbon credits, recently warned about this risk. (7) That continued selling of REDD+ carbon credits by private sector REDD+ projects will create a mess under these circumstances can already be seen in the Brazilian state of Acre. There, the German government is funding a 'jurisdictional REDD+' programme called 'REDD Early Movers'. (8)

The German government programme has paid a total of 25 million Euro between 2012 and 2016 to the government of Acre in return for the state of Acre submitting documents showing that emissions from deforestation in Acre had stayed below a level agreed in the REDD contract between the two governments. That level was very generous. It did not require additional emission reductions to those already achieved in previous years because the calculation included the high-deforestation years 2003-2005. Law enforcement measures by the Brazilian state had already led to steep reductions in deforestation rates in the following years. One could argue that the German government was paying Acre for emission reductions

achieved in the past through non-REDD+ measures, or that Germany was paying Acre to maintain the forest carbon stock, a concept that had been rejected as unaffordable during the early years of UN negotiations about REDD+.

The state of Acre can use the money for any activity it deems necessary to reduce deforestation. A closer look at what the Acre government has decided to spend the money on reveals among others that much money has gone into consultancy reports and studies and very little has reached communities. This is mirroring many of the widely documented problems with REDD+ elsewhere.

What does REDD Early Movers in Acre tell us about 'jurisdictional REDD'?

Looking at the 'REDD Early Movers' programme in Acre also reveals the contradictions that arise when 'jurisdictional REDD' programmes try to integrate private sector REDD+ projects that are already selling carbon credits on the voluntary carbon market. In Acre, at least three such projects exist: The Purus, Valparaiso and Envira REDD+ projects. The carbon balance sheet prepared by the government of Acre for the 'REDD Early Movers' programme with Germany deducts 10 per cent of the state's emission reductions from the balance sheet to account for the carbon credits sold by these three REDD+ projects. Purus for example sold carbon credits to the FIFA for compensation of part of the emissions from the 2014 Football World Cup. Adding up the numbers, however, shows that these three projects are claiming far more than the 10 per cent deducted in the state's carbon balance sheet. That means, it is possible, if not likely, that some of the reductions (if they happened at all) are counted twice: By the private sector REDD+ project selling carbon credits, as in the FIFA case, and by the state of Acre in its carbon balance sheet. From 2020, that risk will arise in many more countries. Particularly likely are such situations in countries like Peru, Kenya or the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (9) with several or large existing private sector REDD+ projects already selling carbon credits and where the companies running these projects are involved in designing 'jurisdictional REDD+' programmes.

As the example of Acre shows, for communities, the impacts of 'jurisdictional REDD' programmes may well be much the same as those caused by individual REDD+ projects: being first in line to face restrictions on traditional forest use practises and last in line for receiving meaningful compensation or 'benefits' that REDD+ is supposed to generate for forest-dependent communities.

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Member of the International Secretariat of the WRM

(1) REDD stands for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation. See WRM's Collection of REDD+ Conflicts, Contradictions and Lies for examples of the many ways in which REDD+ projects are harmful to forest-dependent communities.

(2) See "What do forests have to do with climate change, carbon markets and REDD?", <http://wrm.org.uy/books-and-briefings/what-do-forests-have-to-do-with-climate-change-carbon-markets-and-redd/>

(3) See also the book *Licensed Larceny* by Nick Hildyard. <http://www.thecornerhouse.org.uk/>

resource/licensed-larceny

(4) How REDD projects undermine peasant farming. Report by GRAIN and WRM. <https://www.grain.org/article/entries/5322-how-redd-projects-undermine-peasant-farming-and-real-solutions-to-climate-change>

(5) It's maybe also important to note that the total of these reductions that countries have committed to are far too low to avoid global temperature increases of less than 2 degrees Celsius: The USA, EU, China and India alone would take up the entire so-called carbon budget of fossil carbon that can still be released until 2050 to ensure a 50 per cent possibility that temperatures increase by no more than 2 degrees. And a good part of China's emissions are from producing goods exported to the USA and the EU. http://www.globalcarbonproject.org/carbonbudget/16/files/GCP_CarbonBudget_2016.pdf

(6) Who takes the credit? Report by Fern and Third World Network. <http://www.fern.org/whotakesthecredit>

(7) A New Paradigm for Voluntary Climate Action: Reduce Within, Finance Beyond. Gold Standard report. <https://www.goldstandard.org/blog-item/new-paradigm-voluntary-climate-action-%E2%80%98reduce-within-finance-beyond%E2%80%99>

(8) Economia Verde, Povos das Florestas e Territórios: violações de direitos no estado do Acre. Plataforma Dhesca Brasil. <http://www.plataformadh.org.br/2015/09/22/2015-economia-verde-povos-das-florestas-e-territorios-violacoes-de-direitos-no-estado-do-acre/>

(9) Rainforest Foundation UK: Logging in Congo's rainforests: A 'carbon bomb' about to be primed by the Government of Norway? <http://www.rainforestfoundationuk.org/media.ashx/drc-carbon-bomb-briefing-2017.pdf>

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REDD+ in the Paris Agreement secures funding for conservation industry while large-scale deforestation advances unhindered

[From WRM Bulletin 228, January 2017](#)

Those responsible at the European Investment Bank, the Green Climate Fund or in the governments of Norway and Germany and other funders keep ignoring the growing evidence showing that if the goals are reducing forest loss and tackling the root causes of climate change, continued funding for REDD+ is counterproductive – and that REDD+ above all allows actors within the development and conservation industry continued access to financial resources.

The “conservation industry” – groups such as The Nature Conservancy, WWF, Conservation International, consultants and auditors of REDD+ projects – and funders like the World Bank celebrated the formal recognition of REDD+ in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in December 2015. They have been lobbying for an inclusion of REDD+ into global carbon markets established by the UN’s Kyoto Protocol for nearly a decade. For communities affected by REDD+ projects and programmes, however, the news will have been no reason to celebrate. Faced with harassment, tenure insecurity and restrictions on their traditional forest use, forest peoples and traditional forest users have been on the sharp edge of the REDD+ experiment that has seen the conservation industry pocket hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars, Norwegian kronor and euros for the unfulfilled promise to turn REDD+ into a successful forest conservation tool that will halt deforestation.

In reality, REDD+ is not designed to protect forests or reduce deforestation but to enable corporations and industrialized countries to continue burning fossil carbon even longer. Instead, REDD+ falsely singles out small-scale farming and shifting cultivation as the main cause for the destruction of tropical forests. Perhaps it should not come as a surprise that the result of 10 years of conservation industry experimenting with REDD+ is an increase in forest loss in several areas where REDD+ projects have been implemented – REDD-Early Movers programme in Acre, Brazil and the Mai N’dombe REDD+ project in the Democratic Republic of Congo, to name just a few (1). Worse than that, REDD+ implementation on the ground has resulted in severe restrictions on forest peoples’ traditional land use while large-scale cattle ranching, mining, hydro-dam and infrastructure developments continue unabated, destroying large swaths of tropical forests. Thus, REDD+ has shown to be the wrong tool for tackling the drivers of large-scale destruction. (2)

Yet, despite the dismal track-record of REDD+ over the past 10 years, corporate and institutional investors and their partners from the conservation industry keep announcing new REDD+ initiatives. The European Investment Bank, Conservation International and an investment fund called ‘Althelia Climate Fund’, for example, received a total of US\$53.5 million (US\$ 35 million investment and US\$ 18.5 million as grant) from the UN Climate Convention’s Green Climate

Fund (3) for a REDD+ programme in Madagascar. Norway, corporations from the global food industry (responsible for deforestation and substantial greenhouse gas emissions) and the World Bank's Global Environmental Facility (GEF) announced a new "tropical forest and agriculture focused fund" at the World Economic Forum 2017 in the Swiss luxury ski resort Davos. The new fund is said to use a 'jurisdictional approach', (see below), and mentions Brazil and Indonesia as initial countries where projects are to take place. Global food companies that are said to be interested in supporting the fund include Carrefour, Mars, Nestlé, and Unilever – the latter having announced an investment of US\$25 million over a five year period into the fund.

But do these global food corporations really want us make believe they care about forests and forest peoples' rights? The motive of protecting market shares – and therefore, profit margins – in industrialized countries and urban centers where consumers increasingly demand 'deforestation-free' products seems more plausible. It would also explain why these corporations are not presenting initiatives to reduce corporate control of the international food system and a strengthening of the less carbon-intensive peasant farming models. Expecting such measures from global food corporations would be like expecting that fossil fuel corporations lobby the UN to adopt a strong climate agreement that clearly spells out an end to fossil carbon burning in the near future.

Why do governments such as Norway and Germany, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and corporations such as Unilever keep pouring new money into REDD+ despite the initiative having "fallen far short of what was hoped"? (4) A recent academic article provides some explanation. 'Promising Change, Delivering Continuity: REDD+ as Conservation Fad' explains that for the conservation and development industry, REDD+ serves to help them ensure "to generate value and appropriate financial resources." (5) A fad is a "form of collective behavior that develops within a culture, a generation or social group and which impulse is followed enthusiastically by a group of people for a finite period of time". And usually, effectiveness or suitability of the fad to the solving of the actual problem matters little.

The article notes that a recent study of "23 of the 300 sub-national initiatives showed that only 4 had managed to actually sell carbon credits and found that funding is a key challenge to sustain the initiatives." The article also mentions technical "challenges", and explains that "marketing of carbon credits under the voluntary carbon standard systems involves complex technical procedures and requirements."

The authors explain that while the language and arguments change when the conservation industry comes up with a new proposal to save forests – that "REDD+ implies change at the discursive level." One such recent change in the REDD+ discussion is the term 'jurisdictional REDD+'. It means that governments and development banks are moving away from funding individual REDD+ projects and instead aim to put REDD+ activities in place at the level of a whole province, state and ultimately, an entire country. The German government's REDD Early Movers programme is an example of a 'jurisdictional' REDD+ programme where

the German government pays the government of the Brazilian state of Acre if Acre can provide evidence that deforestation in the state has not exceeded an agreed maximum of forest loss. The new tropical forest fund mentioned above that was announced by Norway and others in Davos, also announced it would focus on 'jurisdictional' projects.

Despite such changes in terminology, the authors of 'Promising Change, Delivering Continuity' say that in practical terms, REDD+ – like previous 'conservation fads' – above all stands for "continuity and repetitiveness in terms of the initial promises and expectations leading to substantial donor financing, pilot project activities, and policy development and implementation processes." The authors also say that REDD+ promises and expectations "have achieved little in terms of changing actual forest management and use on the ground outside selected pilot project sites, but have sustained the livelihoods of actors within the development and conservation industry, including academics.

It is unfortunate that those responsible at the European Investment Bank, the Green Climate Fund or in the governments of Norway and Germany keep ignoring the growing evidence showing that if the goals are reducing forest loss and tackling the root causes of climate change, continued funding for REDD+ is counterproductive. That evidence will not change just because the conservation lobby has succeeded in having REDD+ mentioned in the UN's Paris Agreement, or banks and governments keep pouring more money into new regional, 'jurisdictional' REDD+ initiatives.

The 'Promising change' article concludes that REDD+ above all is "a discursive commodity that is carefully promoted in particular ways that allow actors within the development and conservation industry access to financial resources." Because there are still many who look to REDD+ in the hope of addressing global climate change and protecting forests and forest peoples' rights, the authors urge a questioning of the uses of funding allocated to REDD+. Add to that the severe restrictions, criminalization and tenure insecurity for forest peoples and traditional forest users affected where REDD+ projects are implemented (2), it is time to replace the failed REDD+ experiment with support for the struggles and initiatives of forest peoples and traditional forest users who have protected forests for generations. Several studies have shown that where indigenous peoples' territories are recognized and demarcated and where the rights of traditional forest communities are respected, deforestation rates are lower than in surrounding areas not under control of indigenous peoples or traditional forest communities. (6)

(1) See among others, 'Deforestation is increasing in the Mai N'dombe REDD project area. And the project still sells carbon credits' at: <http://www.redd-monitor.org/2016/02/18/deforestation-is-increasing-in-the-mai-ndombe-redd-project-area-and-the-project-still-sells-carbon-credits/> ; The virtual economy of REDD: Conflicts of interest, hot air, and dodgy baselines at: <http://www.redd-monitor.org/2016/06/02/the-virtual-economy-of-redd-conflicts-of-interest-hot-air-and-dodgy-baselines/> ;

(2) For examples, see REDD Collection of Conflicts and reports on the website www.redd-monitor.org

(3) See the Green Climate Fund information about the approval of the funds here: <http://www.greenclimate.fund/-/sustainable-landscapes-in-eastern-madagascar>

(4) See also the extensive CIFOR study 'REDD+ on the ground: A case book of subnational initiatives across the globe.' Published in 2014.

(5) Promising Change, Delivering Continuity: REDD+ as Conservation Fad. Article by Jens Friis Lund et al. Published in the journal World Development (2016).

(6) See graph 'Indigenous groups are good forest stewards', pg. 17 in the Fern et al. report 'Going Negative'. <http://www.fern.org/sites/fern.org/files/Going%20negative%20version%202.pdf>

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REDD and Rights: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

[From WRM Bulletin 234, November 2017](#)

The proposal to include forests in the UN climate negotiations is now 10 years old. Since then, the issue of human rights and the rights of indigenous peoples, women, local communities, and others, has been an interplay of actors, scripts, stages, casts and comedies. But above all, special effects and makeup have prevailed.

The foundation of critical thinking, then, is in the dissent of the existing state of things and the search for alternatives, drawing from characterizations of the present situation, whose causes can obviously be located in the past” (1)
in memoriam Hector Alimonda

The proposal to include forests in the UN climate negotiations is now 10 years old. Since the 2007 climate conference in Bali, Indonesia—within the framework of moving forward with the REDD+ mechanism—the issue of human rights and the rights of indigenous peoples, women, local communities, and others, has been an interplay of actors, scripts, stages, casts and comedies. But above all, special effects and makeup have prevailed (2).

The Good

We must recognize that it is a good thing that there have been efforts in recent years to address the issue of peoples’ rights in the face of a problem as serious as climate change. Those of us who have been raising our voices for twenty years, demanding real solutions to global warming—such as leaving fossil fuels in the ground—always invoke the rights of people where these resources are extracted, the rights of communities where projects have been applied under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) or other carbon offset mechanisms, and also the rights of nature.

Thus, since REDD+ began to be discussed in climate negotiations, many organizations—especially at the international level—pushed to include the rights of indigenous peoples. This pressure eventually led to the proposal “No Rights, No REDD+,” in December 2008. However, these just demands took another course in the following years.

One example is the right to territory—a collective right that people have been demanding for decades—and in particular the one on land and territorial titling. Although the latter is a right that is foreign to the customary practices of demarcating and organizing their territories, it has been necessary to demand it in front of the forceful incursion of States. In this context, the REDD+ mechanism and REDD+ programs at the national level are clearly distorting this essential right of

peoples. Because for carbon trading to work, collective property must be assigned a private use; since it must be clear who owns what, how much, where and to what extent. The buyers will own a property title to the carbon found in a certain amount of land covered by forests, which is demarcated and titled. In this case, land titling is thus being promoted and used by carbon traders to give buyers a guarantee of ownership of the carbon contained.

Hence, the good news that human rights and the rights of peoples have been included in the basis of measures addressing climate change has been corrupted.

The Bad

Those who have dominated climate negotiations—from corporate actors, financiers and even conservation NGOs and hegemonic government representatives—understand and take on the issue of rights in a totally different way than indigenous peoples and other local communities. Human rights and the rights of nature have been subjugated to capital and to so-called business and financial rights. The lobbying and business deals that coopt climate change summits have ensured that corporate interests prevail over common sense, under the narrative that they are the superheroes saving the planet. This raises a clear conflict about rights, as money—in the form of capital—has become a subject with rights, above humans and all forms of life.

The Paris Agreement, signed in the COP21 climate negotiations in 2016, features a new scenography but with the same protagonists. Among other drawbacks, it ratifies the inclusion of forests “to conserve and enhance, as appropriate, sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases.” (Article 5) These will deepen the loss of peoples’ rights at the local level, and—with the possibility of offsetting emissions through REDD+ projects—will increase the extraction and burning of oil, gas and coal, thus deepening climate change. In the best style of *Comedie-Française*, with its permanent troupe of actors, the Paris Agreement perpetuates the distribution of pollution quotas amongst those who pollute most; and it also perpetuates the possibility of conducting a global business, not only among companies but also among States.

Under the Paris Agreement, the logic of using forests to offset pollution has a planetary impact. Although REDD+ includes forest plantations, agriculture and soils—that is, any vegetation or soil that may contain carbon—it focuses mainly on the forests in Africa, Asia and Latin America, which are mostly under indigenous peoples’ collective ownership systems, and for this very reason, are the largest and best cared for forests.

REDD+ turns indigenous peoples and nature into permanent providers of environmental or ecosystems services. So we can say that REDD+ not only contributes to further loss of peoples’ rights and worsens climate change, but it also violates the rights of nature. REDD+ subjects nature to processes of slavery, servitude and appropriation of its work (in the same way that happens with peoples), by converting its biological cycles, functions and the recreation of life and reproductive cycles into work and goods that can be bought and sold.

The Ugly

One of the objectives of REDD+ promoters is to try to reduce resistance to project implementation in mainly indigenous territories; and they try to win over local organizations so that the REDD+ mechanism is well looked upon and accepted.

Thus, as if by a special cinematic effect, human and peoples' rights in climate negotiations have been vanishing or undergoing metamorphosis. Rights became standards. The rights of women became voluntary safeguards; other rights became "participation and involvement in reporting and monitoring"; collective and territorial rights became "forest governance"; and the protection and enforcement of rights became merely promoted or something that "will be taken into account." Rights became "establishing operational models to comply with safeguards and consolidate the co-benefits," that is to say, "non-carbon benefits," as stated by Indigenous REDD+, an international initiative managed by the Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA) (3).

In essence, the inclusion of human rights in REDD+ is nothing more than makeup so that it looks pretty—to try to stop peoples' rebellion and hide the truth behind these projects.

In light of this, we must protect peoples' rights to resist, to say NO to carbon offset projects, to not be displaced, to not have restrictions on their access and traditional use of their territories, to not be used so that oil or mining companies can violate another community's rights in another part of the planet and to not be manipulated so that the machinery keeps working.

Epilogue

To conclude, we must further define what we mean when we say rights.

Even though rights are inherent to subjects—human and non-human—they are not static. Rights are a process: in historical, political, social and natural terms. They are a matter of dignity and they emerge as a reaction to oppression, discrimination, or the loss of livelihood. They are an ideal to attain, and they are not granted by the United Nations, let alone by the World Bank or transnational conservation organizations.

REDD+ assumes that rights are a reality that has already been achieved, conferred by the operators of this kind of project, and it distorts them by considering them to be a matter of governance, bureaucracy or institutional engineering. It also perverts rights because it "universalizes" them within a framework of Western capitalist modernity. Today, due to historical and political circumstances, rights are imbued with cultural and natural pluriversality.

When the concept of rights is part of climate negotiations, as in the REDD-rights pairing, it prioritizes benefiting the free market, meanwhile nullifying the cultural and political contexts of the villages and peoples where these kinds of projects or programs are carried out.

The proposal to include rights in REDD+ should have demanded the real practice of collective rights. These rights, according to Mexican Enrique Leff, are

nourished by the “rights of the cultural being to build diverse worlds of life,” by the “rights to reinvent their cultural identities,” or by the rights “to reconstruct worlds of life and design possible futures.” (4) REDD+ clearly prevents the exercise of these rights.

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(1) CLACSO. *Pensamientos críticos contemporáneos: análisis desde Latinoamérica*. Piedrahita C., Díaz A., Vommaro P. (comp.). Bogotá, 2015.

(2) “For example, REDD+ aims to cover 4 billion hectares, that is, 31 per cent of earth’s (non marine) surface.” International Rights of Nature Tribunal. *Presentation of REDD+ as a case of violation of the rights of nature*. Lima, 2014.

(3) CBC-GIZ. *REDD+ INDÍGENA EN EL PERÚ: Perspectivas, avances, negociaciones y desafíos desde la mirada de los actores involucrado*. Pinto, V. Molero, M. (Eds). Lima, February 2014.

(4) Leff, Enrique. “Las relaciones de poder del conocimiento en el campo de la ecología política: una mirada desde el sur.” In: *ECOLOGÍA POLÍTICA LATINOAMERICANA. VOLUMEN I. Ecología política latinoamericana: pensamiento crítico, diferencia latinoamericana y rearticulación epistémica*. CLACSO. Héctor Alimonda [et al.] (Coords). Buenos Aires 2017.

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Envira REDD+ project in Acre, Brazil: Gold certificate from carbon certifiers for empty promises

[From WRM Bulletin 237, April 2018](#)

A rubber tappers community, part of a 40,000-hectare REDD+ project, faces a difficult struggle to maintain their way of life. The project has already sold carbon credits, yet to date only provided the local community with dental kits and a visit to the dentist.

The ‘Envira Amazonia Project’ is one of three forest carbon (REDD+) offset ventures that the US-based company CarbonCo LLC is pursuing in the Brazilian state of Acre. The project area covers almost 40,000 hectares of Amazon rainforest, and is part of a massive 200,000 hectare property claimed by the company JR Agropecuária e Empreendimentos EIRELI. That claim, however, is disputed. Rubber tapper families have been living on the land for generations but most have been unable to obtain legal title documents that confirm their rights to the land. The REDD+ project threatens the future of the community because it imposes restrictions on the future use of the land and prevents reactivation of peasant farming plots abandoned in the last decade.

The main owner of the Brazilian company involved in the Envira Amazonia REDD+ project is Duarte Jose do Couto Neto. Do Couto Neto is involved in a number of enterprises (1), and was candidate for the ultra-right Prona party in Acre in the 1990s. As recently as September 2017, he expressed his support for the current presidential candidate of the ultra-right in Brazil, and the military dictatorship stating that he was longing for the military regime (“Saudades e muita do regime militar”). (2)

Like in most parts of the Brazilian Amazon, land tenure within the project area is complicated and disputed, but you would not know that from reading the project or certification documents: the land owner’s claim to a massive 200,000 hectares is taken for granted and no disputes over land are mentioned. Nor do the auditors who approved the Climate, Community and Biodiversity (CCB) certificate question how one person, in this case, Duarte Jose do Couto Neto – was able to legally acquire such a vast expanse of privately held land in relative proximity to the country’s border area with Bolivia and Peru. Rubber tappers have used the land for generations and therefore, have legal rights to the land they occupy. Yet, very few families hold land titles. Approximately 10 rubber tapper-turned-peasant families hold land titles inside the almost 40,000 hectares that make up the Envira Amazonia REDD+ project. In addition, around 40 families live inside the surrounding area but outside the REDD+ project site. According to project documents, the REDD+ project claims to protect the entire 200,000 hectares and suggests these communities outside the project area also as beneficiaries but does not explain why or how they are involved or affected.

In 2015, the Envira Amazonia REDD+ project was certified under the Climate,

Community and Biodiversity (CCB) standard by the Rainforest Alliance's Brazilian partner, Imaflora. The assessments for the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS – now called Verra) certification were carried out by Environmental Services Inc. (3) In 2016, the certifiers issued the first batch of carbon credits from the project, a second batch of carbon credits was issued in November 2017. (4) The VCS database shows that during 2016/2017 at least 750,000 carbon credits from the Envira Amazonia REDD+ project have been sold. (5)

Community unaware that the project is already selling carbon credits

When the World Rainforest Movement (WRM) visited families living within the almost 40,000 hectares of the Envira Amazonia REDD+ project site in March 2018, community members were unaware that the project had been 'approved' and was selling carbon credits already. Residents explained that many foreigners had been to the area in the previous years, but few had spoken to them and many did not seem to speak Portuguese. They had carried out studies and one person had been visiting each family individually to convince them to support the carbon project.

Most families had signed a form suggesting support for the project or had been photographed when receiving a dental kit. This dental kit contained a small tube of toothpaste and a toothbrush, and has been, along with the offer of a gratis visit to a dentist the only tangible benefit that community members have received to date.

(Empty) Promises the basis for issuance of CCB Gold Level certificate

While residents have not seen any tangible benefits beyond the dental kit and a one-off visit to the dentist, many promises were made when the project was presented to the families. Residents confirmed that the promises made are in line with those mentioned in the project document prepared for the CCB certification: “the landowners will also implement numerous activities to assist local communities and mitigate deforestation pressures such as: offering agricultural extension training courses; beginning patrols of potential deforestation sites in the early stages of the Project; granting land tenure to local communities; and establishing alternative economic activities including commercializing the collection of medicinal plants and açaí.” (6)

Imaflora granted a 'Gold Level' CCB certificate to the Envira Amazonia REDD+ project in 2015 / 2016, based on the project developer's promises to the community. Yet, none of these promises have been fulfilled. As mentioned above, the project owners seem to not even have informed the community that the REDD+ project had passed the certification assessments and was already selling carbon credits. Advertising for the Envira Amazonia REDD+ project also highlights the benefits the project supposedly brings to the community. A carbonfund.org advert for the project, for example, claims that the community is benefitting from the REDD+ project: “Social projects and activities to mitigate deforestation pressures and benefit the local communities include, but are not limited to: agricultural

extension training courses; boat patrols of potential deforestation sites; improving local schools and health clinics; and developing local infrastructure to collect, transport and sell locally-sourced açai, medicinal plants and rubber.” (7) Pictures of children in front of the community school (which has not been operational for the last two years and is in a poor state) and a picture of a community meeting inside the school building are included to suggest a project that is beneficial for the local community.

Envira Amazonia REDD+: Restrictions, not benefits, the reality for families

While project owners and certification bodies create a virtual reality of the Envira Amazonia REDD+ project benefitting families in the project area, the reality for the community on the ground is similar to that faced by communities affected by the other two CarbonCO LLC REDD+ projects in Acre: the Purus and Valparaíso / Russas REDD+ projects. (8) A large-scale land owner with questionable land title takes advantage of the insecure tenure situation and isolated location of the community and uses his position of power over the families to impose land use restrictions that are likely to accelerate a rural exodus.

The Envira REDD+ project prohibits use of the forest by rubber tapper families outside the 150 hectares currently available to each of the families living inside the REDD+ project site. Residents are thus not allowed to reactivate recently abandoned plots that were used by rubber tapper families as late as the 1990s. This will force youth who have grown up in the area and wish to continue their parents’ way of life as rubber tappers and peasant farmers to leave the land and migrate to the city where employment opportunities will be scarce. Deforestation for cattle ranching continues to be pursued in the surrounding areas by large-scale land owners, yet rubber tapper and peasant families are denied the land that has been used for generations for rubber tapping and peasant farming.

The virtual reality of a REDD+ project providing ‘Gold Level’ community benefits, that advertises on the carbonfund.org website and certification reports create is in sharp contrast to the reality of empty promises and future land use restrictions that characterize the Envira Amazonia REDD+ project on the ground.

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(1) A partial list of companies and properties in Acre and Mato Grosso that is apparently monitored as part of the REDD+ project certification (to prevent so-called leakage, i.e. the owner just moving cattle ranching to these other properties) is included in the certification documents. Several of the properties (e.g. Seringal Canada) listed form part of the massive 200,000 hectare land holding of which the REDD+ project is part. However, the list appears to be incomplete and not include activities in the Amazonas state which several residents of the area referred to. At least two companies that list do Couto Neto as Partner are not on the list: Santa Cruz Da Amazonia Empreendimentos Ltda and Start Up Da Amazonia Projetos De Exploracao Sustentavel Ltda Me.

(2) Comment Duarte Jose do Couto Neto to article ‘General do exército bate forte no STF’

(3) Financial reports of the non-profit organisation Carbonfund.org show a payment of USD

136,802 in 2015 to Environmental Services Inc. The reports do not explain whether this was the cost of validation and verification of the Envira Amazonia REDD+ project to the VCS carbon standard. CarbonCo LLC is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the non-profit organisation Carbonfund.org. The Carbonfund.org Foundation 2016 annual report is available [here](#); documents filed for exemption from income tax are available [here](#).

4) See [here](#) for the long list of documents linked to the Verra / VCS carbon and CCB certification documents.

(5) [Link to VCS / Verra database](#)

(6) [Envira Amazonia project document prepared for CCB certification](#)

(7) [Carbonfund.org advert for the Envira Amazonia REDD+ project.](#)

(8) For information about the impacts of these projects on communities inside the REDD+ project sites, see the WRM publication 'Observations on a private REDD project in the state of Acre, Brazil' and C. Faustino & F. Furtado (2015): *Economia Verde, Povos das Florestas e Territórios: violações de direitos no estado do Acre* Bericht für die Plataforma DHESCA Brasil.

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REDD Alert!

How REDD+ projects undermine peasant farming and real solutions to climate change

[From WRM Bulletin 219, October 2015](#)

Agriculture is increasingly being discussed at high level forums on climate change that promote initiatives which they claim will help farmers to adapt to climate change and reduce agriculture's greenhouse gas emissions. One such initiative is REDD+. REDD+, however, reinforces the corporate food system that is largely responsible for climate change, has robbed many communities and forest peoples of their territories and undermines the food and agricultural systems of peasants and indigenous peoples that can in fact cool the planet.

Agriculture is increasingly being discussed at high level forums on climate change that promote different programmes which they claim will help farmers to adapt to climate change and reduce agriculture's greenhouse gas emissions. These initiatives are heavily influenced by corporations and governments that want to protect industrial agriculture and corporate food systems from real solutions to climate change that would provide peasants with more lands and support agro-ecological farming for local markets. As a result, small scale peasant agriculture is being targeted by a number of aggressively promoted false solutions to climate change while industrial and corporate-driven agriculture mostly continues with business as usual. One such programme is called REDD+.

A recent [publication from GRAIN and the WRM](#) explains some of the patterns that make Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) a danger for peasant farming. The publication explains how REDD+ reinforces the corporate food system that is largely responsible for climate change, has robbed many communities and forest peoples of their territories and undermines the food and agricultural systems of peasants and indigenous peoples that can cool the planet.

In most cases, the information peasant communities receive about REDD+ projects is biased or incomplete. Many promises of benefits and employment are made by project proponents if the community agrees to the proposed REDD+ activity. But the majority of REDD+ activities limit the use of the forest for shifting cultivation, gathering and other subsistence use. Hunting, fishing, grazing or cutting some trees for construction of housing or canoes are also often restricted and the restrictions are enforced by REDD+ project owners, often with the support of armed guards. Furthermore, most communities are not informed that these projects generate carbon credits, or that the buyers of these credits are some of the largest corporations worldwide, whose businesses are built on fossil fuel extraction and the destruction of territories of traditional communities. Peasant farming is thus singled out as the cause of deforestation while the major drivers of deforestation are ignored. At the same time, large-scale drivers of deforestation like industrial logging, expansion of oil palm, soya or tree plantations, infrastructure

mega-projects, mining, large hydro-dams – and above all, industrial agriculture expanding into the forest – continue without restriction (See [“REDD: a Gallery of Conflicts, Contradictions and Lies”](#)).

Some patterns that make REDD+ a danger to peasant farming

REDD+ blames peasant farming practices for deforestation and emissions

Peasants around the world are being squeezed onto less land while still managing to produce most of the world’s food, without nearly the amount of GHG emissions produced by large-scale industrial farms. The overwhelming majority of REDD+ projects, however, seek to reduce GHG emissions by further reducing the lands that peasant farmers and indigenous communities have access to or by changing how the land is used by peasant farmers.

REDD+ proponents have the erroneous assumption that shifting cultivation in particular, a practice commonly used by forest peoples around the world, is a major cause of deforestation. This is simply not true. What is usually lumped together under the term “slash-and-burn” in reality are hundreds of different land use practises, adapted to the local circumstances. Far from causing large-scale forest loss, these practises have allowed forest-dependent communities to maintain the forests they depend on. Where shifting cultivation is leading to forest degradation, rotation cycles are usually shortened because less land is available for shifting cultivators. This is almost always a result of expanding industrial plantations or mega-infrastructure projects or industrial logging, which grab land peasant communities rely on for food production.

Another argument used by REDD+ proponents is that the “opportunity cost” is lower than it is with restricting the expansion of plantations and industrial farms. The “opportunity cost” is a measure of the economic value that would have been generated, by companies or peasants, if deforestation activities were allowed to continue. The consultants can see the money that plantations generate for companies; but they do not see the whole value that forest areas represent for peasant communities in terms of local food production, housing, medicines, biodiversity, culture, etc. For REDD+ proponents, therefore, it is more “cost” effective to stop peasants from using forest lands than it is to stop plantation companies and corporate farmers.

REDD+: Good business for carbon companies, international conservation NGOs, consultants and industrialized countries

One of the big promises of REDD+ is that forest-dependent communities and peasant farmers will get paid for protecting the forest. To entice governments and communities of the South, REDD+ proponents routinely make exaggerated claims about the size of the global trade in carbon credits – or the expected size of a future forest carbon market.

The reality is that the price for carbon permits has been in free fall since 2008. And while carbon permits might swing back to the expected price, the experiences of existing REDD+ projects that sell carbon credits show how most of the supposed profits that are in theory going to communities will be captured by others.

Before a REDD+ project can sell carbon credits, a lot of technical documents have to be written, certified and verified by different auditing firms. All of these preparations cost money. And they are not cheap. They add up to what is called the 'overhead costs' or 'transaction costs' of REDD+ projects.

For international conservation groups like The Nature Conservancy, Conservation International, and WWF by contrast, REDD+ is good business because they are able to capture a large portion of the international aid and climate funding available for REDD+. They are involved in many REDD+ projects and initiatives and act as advisors on national REDD+ plans. None of these groups have revealed the size of their REDD+ budgets, or how much of their funding comes from the climate finance that industrialised countries account as REDD+ payments to the global South.

Industrialised countries also stand to gain even more from REDD+ if the new UN climate treaty currently being negotiated provides them with the possibility to take the credit for tropical countries reducing deforestation. One of the proposals on the table is that the countries providing financial support for REDD+ count REDD+ reductions towards their own emission targets – a very convenient option for governments in industrialized countries seeking ways to avoid deep emissions cuts at home.

REDD+ undermines food sovereignty

There are different ways that REDD+ projects commonly undermine local food production and create food insecurity among local communities. In some cases, families participating directly in the offset project must reduce their production of food crops in order to plant trees for the project. In other cases, the REDD+ project prevents the communities from accessing forested areas that they rely on for hunting and gathering, for shifting cultivation or for grazing.

The regular failure of REDD+ initiatives to 'establish alternatives to slash-and-burn' or 'modernise' peasant agriculture through proposals developed by far-away project owners or conservation NGOs points to another tension inherent in REDD+: these projects are concerned first and foremost with maximizing carbon storage in the area that will deliver carbon credits. Initiatives to involve peasant communities and forest peoples are an afterthought, a requirement from donors or to show supposedly participatory project implementation.

REDD+ undermines community control over territories

Tradable REDD+ credits are a form of property title. Those who purchase the credits do not need to own the land nor the trees that are "storing" the carbon, but they do own the right to decide how that land will be used. They also usually have

contractual rights to monitor what is happening on the land and request access to the land at any time they choose for as long as they own the carbon credit.

Communities often are not informed about how the contract they sign for REDD+ projects might undermine their control over their territories. Often, obligations that communities or families enter into are not clearly explained or they are described in ambiguous terms that can easily be misinterpreted. Seeking legal advice on such complex and ambiguous technical documents is made difficult because almost all REDD+ contracts contain strict confidentiality clauses.

Another important way that REDD+ projects affect community control over territories is by creating divisions within communities. While many promises of employment through REDD+ projects remain unfulfilled, REDD+ projects generally do hire people from within the community to work as forest rangers or guards whose role it is to report on compliance with REDD+ project rules within the community. In other words, they are expected to keep an eye on other members of the community. Their role is to report to the project owners if community members cut down trees, hunt, fish, grow food crops in the forest or use the forests as they have always done but which is forbidden under the REDD+ project rules. This form of 'employment' creates divisions within the community that will negatively affect the ability of communities to organize and work together to defend their territories.

How changes in the law inspired by carbon markets are threatening agrarian reform

Forest Code in Brazil is an example for how legal changes informed by REDD+ and similar offset trading initiatives pose a risk to agrarian reform and peasant rights to land. The 2012 revision of the Forest Code extends the use of tradable forest restoration credits. These are credits that a landowner can sell if s/he has cleared less forest than allowed under the Forest Code. Farmers who have in the past cleared more forest than the law allowed and are obliged under the 2012 Forest Code to restore the area cleared in excess of the legal limit – or risk losing access to agricultural credit lines – can buy these forest restoration credits instead of restoring the forest on their own land.

These tradable forest restoration credits put a key instrument for Agrarian Reform in Brazil at great risk. The historical instrument of Agrarian Reform has been the expropriation of latifúndios that could be shown to be unproductive and thus not fulfilling the constitutionally required “social function” of the land. The introduction of tradable forest restoration credits created an instrument that could shield owners of latifúndios from expropriation for social purposes because these credits would transform unproductive estates into carbon factories and repositories of environmental reserves. This in turn would allow land owners to claim that the land is fulfilling the constitutionally required “social function”.

REDD+ facilitates the expansion of corporate agriculture

The deforestation caused by the agriculture sector over the past few decades is almost entirely due to the expansion of commodity crops for export and for animal feed, with the vast majority of this expanded production on large-scale industrial farms and plantations. Deforestation is then directly linked to international commodity supply chains that are controlled by a small number of transnational food corporations. These include commodity traders and producers like Cargill, Louis Dreyfus Group, Bunge, Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), JBS or Wilmar International, food companies like Nestlé, Danone, or Unilever, and supermarkets and fast food chains like McDonald's, Walmart or Carrefour.

To shield themselves from bad publicity and to protect their supply channels, corporations have established voluntary certification schemes and commodity roundtables with the participation of a few large international NGOs (see separate article in this bulletin).

Conclusions

The problems are clear, the solutions exist... and they are very different from the REDD+ concept.

REDD+ helps to conceal the fact that while agriculture is a major contributor to climate change, not everybody growing crops shares the same responsibility for the emissions. It is the industrial food system – with its heavy use of chemical inputs, its erosion of soils, its deforestation and its emphasis on production for export markets – which is the main source of greenhouse gas emissions.

Yet, REDD+ falsely blames shifting cultivation and peasant farming for deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions. In reality, peasants are already proving that it is possible to 'feed the world' while producing far fewer emissions than the export-led, industrial model of agricultural production. Giving lands back to small farmers and indigenous communities is the most effective way to deal with the challenges of feeding a growing global population in an era of unpredictable climate change. REDD+ is a dangerous distraction from urgent action in this direction.

Access the publication here: <http://wrm.org.uy/other-relevant-information/how-redd-projects-undermine-peasant-farming-and-real-solutions-to-climate-change/>

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The Conservation Industry: a for-profit sector?

[From WRM Bulletin 242, February 2019](#)

Conservationist NGOs are increasingly making partnerships with companies that, in fact, are the main drivers of environmental and social disasters. Even worse, they portray their corporate partners as the willing participants of the “solutions”. But, which solutions are they seeking? And solutions for whom?

It is common to see advertisements and campaign brochures with the logo of an international conservationist NGO, like WWF or Conservation International, together with that of a company, such as Coca Cola, Shell or Rio Tinto. But, how can organizations that are supposed to be recognized around the world as watchdogs for protecting the environment establish an alliance with those actors that destroy and pollute that same environment? This, in fact, raises another crucial question: Which type of “solutions” are conservationist NGOs and their corporate partners aiming to reach and for whom?

It is very telling that these conservationist groups’ headquarters, just as those of their corporate partners, are generally based in urban hubs of the global North. Why do they have the legitimacy to decide how to and who should best preserve a specific forest area or a particular specie? What about the knowledges of local groups? And most importantly, what about the communities that have coexisted with those forests and guarded them for countless generations?

Protecting forests from whom?

Protected or conservation areas were created under a philosophy that originated in the global North, in the United States (US) in the late 1800s, which led to the establishment of national parks around the world to preserve areas of “wilderness”, mainly for elite hunts and the enjoyment of scenic beauty. This postcard idea of “wilderness” did not include any human presence; even that of traditional or indigenous groups. The national parks Yellowstone (1872) and Yosemite (1890) in the US, from which indigenous inhabitants were forcibly removed, established the conservation model applied around the world.

By advocating for and assisting with the creation of such parks, conservationist NGOs deepened the racist and colonial assumption that “nature” -understood as untouched or pristine “wilderness”- is and should be separated from any human activity that could change or impact it. These NGOs then also helped in portraying local groups as unruly invaders, “poachers” and “encroachers”. (1)

Forest-dependant populations living in and around national parks are in consequence forcefully evicted or their livelihoods and cultures severely and violently restricted. Hunting, fishing or harvesting for sustaining a livelihood is mostly forbidden in

these areas. Forest peoples are regularly blamed for deforestation or/and accused of “poaching” because they hunt for their food – a convenient justification for the evictions carried out in the name of conservation. They face arrest and beatings, torture and even death. (2) Ironically, western scientists, NGOs, park rangers, military troops, “eco guards”, anti-poaching squads, philanthropists, safari tourists, visitors and many other so-called “experts” are very much allowed into these areas. Fee-paying elite hunters are even encouraged in some. Safari hunters, however, who are mostly rich and white, are of course never called poachers. Conservation practices have in fact deepened the racist division of forest access and have further imposed colonial models and ideas over forest peoples. Conservationist NGOs are at the centre of this.

When Baka indigenous land in Cameroon was stolen from them for creating “protected areas,” the NGO WWF played a key role in dividing up the territory which included safari hunting concessions, logging areas and national parks. Since 2000 WWF has been funding anti-poaching squads who mostly abuse indigenous peoples, while the real problem – commercial poaching – goes largely unaddressed. WWF has also acted as consultant to the logging company that operates in the Baka’s forests. (3)

To enforce some conservation objectives, conservationist NGOs often employ military services to guard the national parks they manage on behalf of governments; a practice often called as “green militarism.” WWF, for example, turned to the Maisha Consulting Company, a private military company, to deliver security operations. This company offers military training for anti-poaching squads in Garamba National Park, DRC, and has provided security advice and installed a network of remote surveillance cameras in Dzangha-Sangha National Park in the Central African Republic. (4)

Ironically enough, many national parks are surrounded or even overlap with licenced projects, like mining, oil or gas extraction. Others are bordering industrial monoculture plantations, logging concessions or large-scale infrastructure projects. But this does not seem to be enough for conservationist NGOs to target these corporate actors in their conservation efforts. Quite the opposite.

Partners in crime

The US-oil and gas multinational ExxonMobil has drilled in the Stabroek exploration area off the coast of Guyana since 2015. Recent discoveries have led the company to estimate that Stabroek’s oil reserves could be worth more than 200 billion dollars. (5) Of course, what the company does not advertise are the many impacts that these activities have on marine diversity, mangrove forests and fisher communities; not to mention its enormous contribution to climate change and local pollution.

Despite this, in August 2018, the NGO Conservation International in Guyana

accepted a 10 million dollars grant from ExxonMobil's Foundation. The stated objectives are to advance sustainable job opportunities; expand community-supported conservation; expand conservation areas in the Rupununi Wetlands; contribute to mangrove restoration and support improvements to community-based fishing, a sector the government of Guyana has identified as critically important to the wellbeing of the Guyanese people. (6)

But, what is the real objective behind the fact that a fossil fuel corporation gives large sums of money to an international conservationist NGO? This "investment" – as the company likes to put it – aims to generate some kind of benefit to the company. And nothing like an international public relations campaign led by a well-known conservationist NGO to try to greenwash what in fact is the biggest and most undeniable cause of climate change: fossil fuel extraction.

Unsurprisingly, this undeniable conflict of interests is not an isolated case. Conservation International also has partnerships with companies like Chevron, Monsanto, Nissan, Walmart and many others (7). And this NGO is not alone.

In 2007, the WWF accepted 20 million dollars from the Coca-Cola company, despite the serious accusations against this company for depleting local water sources around the world. This "investment" was another greenwash strategy. (8) WWF has also partnered with furniture company IKEA, despite the company's expanding logging activities in forests (9), as well as with the Toyota Motor Company, clothing retail company H&M, financial institution HSBC, pulp and paper company Mondi, among many others. The Nature Conservancy, another conservationist NGO, also has partners such as mining company BHP, agribusiness Cargill, oil-giant Shell, Pepsi and Walt Disney.

Moreover, these organizations' board of directors, whose members are supposed to provide guidance and advice for their work, have a blunt conflict of interests. The Nature Conservancy's board, for example, is full of people from the corporate world, including financial companies JP Morgan Chase and the Blackstone Group, multinational Dow Chemical Company, e-commerce conglomerate Alibaba group and many others. (10) And the list goes on and on.

NGOs or companies?

The bottom line is that corporations can provide large amounts of funds to these conservationist NGOs. Yet, at the same time, these NGOs have increasingly become active participants of the financial market, which is bound to the capital accumulation logic, which in turn depends on fossil fuels. (11) Some of the largest conservationist NGOs invest in fossil fuel companies directly.

As author Naomi Klein explain: "Now it turns out that some green groups are literally part owners of the industry causing the crisis they are purportedly trying to

solve. And the money the green groups have to play with is serious.” (12) The Nature Conservancy, as Klein uncover, has 1.4 billion dollars in the US financial market, and the Wildlife Conservation Society has a 377 million dollars of endowment, while the endowment of WWF in the US is worth 195 million dollars.

These large amounts are also used to cover the enormous salaries of their executives. Research by Canadian journalist Donna Laframboise, found out that in 2012, Carter Roberts, the CEO of the US branch of WWF, was paid a salary of 455,147 dollars in 2009. By comparison, the US President has a base salary of 400,000 dollars. In other words, the head of the US branch of the WWF earns more money than the US President. (13)

A direct consequence of conservationist NGOs establishing partnerships with corporations has been their evident willingness and amount of effort put into market-friendly and consumer-driven choices. It is no coincidence that the biggest conservationist NGOs that invest in fossil fuel companies are also amongst the biggest promoters of forest carbon related policies, such as REDD+: The Nature Conservancy, Conservation International, WWF and the Wildlife Conservation Society. (14)

Evidently, promoting programs and policies that are aligned with the interests and activities of corporations is a good way to keep their funding, projects and investments expanding. The “New Generation Plantations Project”, led and coordinated by WWF, is one example of this.

Participants in the Project are well-known monoculture plantation companies, including Mondi (South Africa), Stora Enso (Finnish-Swedish), UPM (Finland), Forestal Arauco (Chile), Kimberly Clark (US), Suzano (Brazil), The Navigator Company (Portugal), The New Forests Company (Mauritius) and CMPC (Chile). These companies have an extensive record of denunciations by local communities, which the WWF has chosen to ignore. On the contrary, the Project promotes the expansion of tree monocultures and helps to greenwash the well-documented destructive consequences of these companies’ activities. At the same time, the Project legitimizes FAO’s misleading definition of forest, which includes monoculture tree plantations. (15) Meanwhile, consumers are being deceived by these types of programs (as well as many other certification schemes) that are run and promoted by conservationist NGOs. By giving destructive activities a possibility to have a green façade, companies can continue and expand their operations – and profits.

It seems that conservation and developmental projects (mega dams, mines, fossil fuel extraction, industrial monocultures, etc.) are, in a way, two sides of the same coin. Top-down impositions over communal territories determined by outsiders, and mostly enforced in a violent manner. Far from protecting forests, conservationist NGOs have become an industry that legitimizes the expansion of destructive economic policies.

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- (1) See, for example, the documentary “Conservation’s Dirty Secrets”, Oliver Steeds, 2014
- (2) See, for example: Protected areas in southeast Cameroon have progressively robbed the Baka “Pygmies” of access to their ancestral lands. They are regularly harassed, arrested and even tortured by wildlife officers and the soldiers that accompany them. Survival International. (The Cameroonian government relies on powerful conservation organisations, including the WWF, to equip its “anti-poaching” squads.) Read further on this and other cases and sign a petition here.
- (3) Survival International, A history of land theft. Southwest Cameroon.
- (4) Duffy Rosaleen, War by Conservation, October 2014;
Survival International, The two Faces of Conservation, 2015
- (5) REDD-Monitor, ExxonMobil strikes US\$200 billion offshore oil reserves in Guyana. Gives US\$10 million to Conservation International, August 2018
- (6) Conservation International, ExxonMobil Foundation invests US\$10 million in Guyana for Research, Sustainable Employment and Conservation, February 2018
- (7) See all corporate partners here.
- (8) The Verge, Coke claims to give back as much water as it uses. An investigation shows it isn’t even close.
- (9) EJ-Atlas, Excessive forest logging Lithuania, August 2018
- (10) See all corporate partners here. And the board of directors.
- (11) Adams W, Sleeping with the enemy?, Journal of Political Ecology, Vol.24, 2017 252
- (12) Klein, Naomi, Why aren’t environmental groups divesting from fossil fuels?, The Nation, 2013
- (13) <https://nofrackingconsensus.com/2012/03/28/the-enormous-ceo-salaries-behind-earth-hour/>
- (14) <https://redd-monitor.org/2013/05/03/naomi-klein-why-arent-environmental-groups-divesting-from-fossil-fuels/>
- (15) No to the WWF New Generations Plantations Project, RECOMA

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Misguided funding: Green Climate Fund support for REDD+

[From WRM Bulletin 243, May 2019](#)

Despite the government of Brazil announcing cutbacks to action against deforestation, the Green Climate Fund awarded US\$ 96 million for alleged emission reductions in the Brazilian Amazon. These avoided emissions in part exist only on paper; and the Fund is set to approve more funding for trading of REDD+ credits.

The Green Climate Fund was set up by governments with the aim to support countries in the global South to respond to climate change. In February 2019, the Fund approved a payment of US\$ 96 million to the government of Brazil which had requested payment via the UN Development Programme (UNDP), for greenhouse gas emissions not released into the atmosphere in the years 2014 and 2015. This was achieved, the UNDP proposal argues, by the government of Brazil having taken measures to reduce deforestation. It was the first time the Green Climate Fund Board approved a funding request for a so-called 'results-based' payment for REDD+. (1) The details of the decision (see below) demonstrate why a large proportion of the payment is likely to be granted for emission reductions that exist on paper only.

The Green Climate Fund has announced it will provide more funding to REDD+ activities in the near future. One particularly objectionable funding request comes from the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the branch of the World Bank that finances private sector companies. The IFC is requesting subsidies so that companies can set up new REDD+ projects or sell their carbon credits from already existing REDD+ ones – projects which are known to have caused controversy and conflict.

What is the Green Climate Fund?

The Green Climate Fund was created in 2010 by the 194 countries that are part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). (2) It is one of the possibilities through which governments (mostly but not exclusively from the global North) can transfer money they committed under the UN Paris Agreement on climate change. The Fund does not implement projects itself. Instead, it allocates funding to project proposals submitted by multilateral institutions like UNDP, the World Bank's IFC, as well as national or regional agencies, including development banks or private banks and NGOs such as WWF or Conservation International. By the end of 2018, the Green Climate Fund had cleared 75 national, regional and international entities from the public and private sector so they are allowed to submit funding proposals to the Fund.

When they set up the Green Climate Fund, 43 national governments committed to

making an initial US\$ 10.3 billion available to the Fund. By the end of 2018, a total of US\$ 4.6 billion had been allocated to 93 funding proposals covering activities in 96 countries. Of the funds that remain from the initial government contributions, US\$ 600 million are set aside for funding of projects already in the Green Climate Fund project pipeline. This includes REDD+ projects like the one awarded to the government of Brazil in February 2019 or an IFC proposal expected to be presented to the Green Climate Fund Board in July 2019. The IFC proposal would include the trading of REDD+ credits from private sector REDD+ projects.

Millions of dollars for 'results' in reducing deforestation even though deforestation is rising

In February 2019, at its 22nd meeting, the Green Climate Fund Board approved the first request for so-called 'results-based REDD+ payments'. On behalf of the government of Brazil, the development agency UNDP requested payment for "results achieved through REDD+ in the Brazilian Amazon biome in 2014 and 2015". The Board agreed to pay US\$ 96 million for 18.82 million tonnes of carbon dioxide which the government of Brazil claims were not released into the atmosphere as a result of government action to reduce deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon during those two years. In the project documents, UNDP and the government of Brazil announce that a second request for payment will be submitted "in future", for results in reducing emissions from deforestation supposedly achieved during 2016 and 2017. (3)

The Brazilian government and UNDP explain that they are requesting payment only for a small portion of the 2.39 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions that according to their calculations have not been released as a result of reduced deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon between 2014 and 2018.

But is this calculation credible? Not really. Much of the Green Climate Fund payment will therefore be for carbon dioxide emissions that either still were released into the atmosphere or for savings that exist on paper only. Here is why: The UNDP payment request calculates the volume of emissions that the government of Brazil claims have been reduced through REDD+ in 2014 and 2015 by comparing recorded deforestation in 2014 (5.012km²) and 2015 (6.207 km²) to the average deforestation between 1996 and 2010 (16.64 km²). This average includes the peak years of deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon, and therefore the average is very high.

This average is called the "forest reference emission level" in the UN climate negotiation jargon. When the government of Brazil submits this forest reference level to the UN (it will be used to check if the government of Brazil will achieve the emission reductions it promised under the UN Paris Agreement in 2015), the hectare figures are converted to tonnes of carbon dioxide. (4) This is also the unit used in the UNDP payment request to the Green Climate Fund: For every tonne of

carbon dioxide that the Green Climate Fund accepts as a “REDD+ result”, it pays five dollars. Because the average deforestation between 1996 and 2010 was so high (and was reduced before REDD+ existed!), actual deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon today could more than double yet the government of Brazil would still be able to claim payment for ‘results’ in reducing deforestation!

Clearly, something must be wrong if a Fund set up to finance action to help avoid climate chaos is paying US\$ 96 million to a government that has announced to be cutting back even further action to reduce deforestation – in a region where deforestation has already started to rise again. (5) The Green Climate Fund also does not request a commitment that the carbon for which payment has been received, remains locked up in the forest after payment. With deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon rising, the US\$ 96 million payment may merely delay the release of emissions from deforestation in by a few years.

Without commitment to maintaining the carbon ‘locked’ and without any information about how much carbon will be ‘saved’ as a result of the activities that will be funded by the payment from the Green Climate Fund, the payment is nonetheless marketed as ‘results-based.’ The government of Norway, a major contributor to the Green Climate Fund and the largest funder of REDD+, announced it would double its financial contribution to the Green Climate Fund shortly after the Board approved the REDD+ funding for Brazil. (6)

Luring peasant farmers into a Payment for Environmental Services Programme while large-scale deforestation remains unaddressed

Some argue that even if the calculations are not so accurate, the money will at least ensure much-needed funding for peasant farmers and indigenous peoples. In reality, the money will be used to lure peasant farmers into a six-year Payment for Environmental Services Programme (called Floresta+). This Programme addresses neither the underlying tenure insecurity nor the lack of government policy support for peasant farming. Instead, it pushes further the intensification of farming practises by paying farmers if they use less than the legally allowed 20 per cent of their land. By contrast, large-scale deforestation as a result of corporate destruction for cattle ranching or soy or eucalyptus monocultures will continue unrestricted.

Scaling up subsidy for private sector REDD+ projects in conflict with communities?

The Board of the Green Climate Fund will have to decide on an even more climate-damaging REDD+ funding request at its meeting in July 2019. The International Finance Corporation (IFC), the World Bank agency financing the (corporate) private sector is preparing to request funding for a ‘Multi-Country Forest Bonds Programme’, “to avoid deforestation in multiple forest basins by leveraging the investment potential from capital markets. Funding REDD+ activities and providing price support for

carbon credits will demonstrate a results-based financing model.” (7)

There are many reasons for the Green Climate Fund Board to reject this proposal, among them:

- The IFC already launched in 2017 a ‘Forest Bonds’ initiative offering investors (‘bond holders’) to choose between receiving REDD+ credits from the controversial Kasigau Corridor REDD+ project in Kenya and receiving the annual interest payment in cash. Reportedly, not a single Forest Bonds ‘bond holder’ has wanted to receive their annual interest payment in the form of REDD+ credits.

- The money which the IFC raises by selling ‘Forest Bonds’ is not invested in forest protection. In fact, investments funded with this money may even cause deforestation. The only funding going to ‘forests’ (in the form of a subsidy to private sector REDD+ project speculators) is the purchasing contract that will be signed with REDD+ project owners who will provide the REDD+ credits that bond holders can choose instead of the annual interest payment in cash. These private sector REDD+ projects have shown to be particularly controversial. (8)

- Green Climate Fund money will be used so the IFC (or a company on behalf of the IFC) will be compensated if it has to sell (or give) the REDD+ carbon credits for less money than they bought them for. There is no climate benefit in such a subsidy (which the IFC calls “Liquidity Facility” in its proposal). In the project proposal, the IFC proposes to pay the standard five dollars per REDD+ credit; but as mentioned above, bond holders of the 2017 Forest Bond have preferred to receive their annual cash payments instead of receiving REDD+ credits at the price of five dollars per credit.

- Even though REDD+ was claimed to be a mechanism to attract private sector funding to forest protection, the private sector has not shown much interest in investing in REDD+ projects – which is a good sign considering that almost all existing REDD+ projects have caused conflict with communities and none can guarantee the contribution to climate protection they claim to be providing. The IFC proposal is to provide cheap loans and help with marketing of the REDD+ credits to private sector investors potentially interested in setting up new REDD+ projects. As mentioned before, such private sector REDD+ projects are bound to be bad news for forest communities and the climate.

- In addition, private sector REDD+ projects will complicate governments’ accounting of carbon emissions: If a private sector investor sells carbon credits from a REDD+ project to IFC or someone else, the government of the country in which the REDD+ project is happening, will have to take out the tonnes of carbon sold as REDD+ credits from its national carbon accounting balance sheet. Those are supposed to keep track of the national pledges and actions at the international level. If countries do not take out the tonnes being sold as REDD+ credits from

their accounting, the same tonne of carbon would be counted twice, by the buyer of the REDD+ credit and in the government's carbon balance sheet. In the language of the UN climate negotiators, this is called 'double-counting'.

In short, approval of the IFC funding would amount to a massive waste of scarce Green Climate Fund money. The money would subsidize private sector REDD+ projects that are bound to cause conflict with forest-dependent communities and are unlikely to address the drivers of large-scale deforestation.

The Green Climate Fund's enthusiasm to pay for 'REDD+ results' (even when there are no verifiable results!) and subsidize carbon offsetting comes at a time where it is clearer than ever that the time for offsetting is over. Real emission cuts are needed –oil must be kept in the soil and coal in the hole, in other words. (9) It also coincides with recognition by many early REDD+ proponents that REDD+ is the wrong instrument for tackling drivers of large-scale deforestation. (10) This analysis, as well as the documentation of the conflicts and violation of forest-dependent community rights that private sector REDD+ projects are regularly embroiled in, seem to have so far escaped the attention of the Green Climate Fund Board members. Based on the experience with REDD+, there is no basis for the Green Climate Fund Board to approve subsidies for private sector REDD+ projects.

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(1) REDD stands for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation. The "plus" in REDD+ indicates that forest conservation, sustainable forest management and afforestation also qualify as REDD+ activities.

(2) For more information from the Green Climate Fund, see 'About the Fund – Green Climate Fund'. For an explanation of how the Green Climate Fund subsidizes REDD+, see: Kill, Jutta, and Liane Schalatek. *Green Climate Fund and REDD+: Funding the Paradigm Shift or Another Lost Decade for Forests and the Climate?* Washington, DC: Heinrich Boll Stiftung, 2019.

(3) For the project information, see the Green Climate Fund country webpage for Brazil

(4) Government figures on carbon dioxide emissions from deforestation have little relation to the amount of carbon dioxide that is actually released into the atmosphere when forests are destroyed. For example, most governments, including the government of Brazil, do not include emissions from drought-induced forest fires in the data the government reports to the UN climate convention.

(5) See for example, Bradford, S. & M. Torres (2017): Brazil on verge of legitimizing Amazon land theft on a grand scale, warn NGOs. *Mongabay*. And Lang, Ch. (2019): Brazil's funding proposal for REDD results-based payments to the Green Climate Fund would set a terrible precedent.

(6) Usher, Ann Danaiya. "Brazil receives first Green Climate Fund grant for REDD+. Critics warn of 'paper reductions' with no real climate benefits." *Development Today*, March 15, 2019

(7) See the presentation Green Climate Fund's Private Sector Facility and the REDD+ Results-Based Payments under section 4 at the 18th meeting of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility Carbon Fund.

(8) ReCommon (2016): *Mad Carbon Laundering. How the IFC subsidizes mining companies and failing REDD projects.*

(9) Lund, J.F. et al. (2017): Promising Change, Delivering Continuity: REDD+ as Conservation Fad. *World Development*. Volume 89, January 2017: 124-139

(10) The webportal REDD Monitor provides in-depth coverage of the wide range of controversies, inconsistencies, contradictions and conflicts associated with REDD+ and results-based payment schemes for REDD+. A further source of information on REDD+, including a map to locate a wide range of critical academic and NGO literature on REDD+ is the Heinrich Böll Foundation's Webdossier *New Economy with Nature*.

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3. Resistance against the proposals to allow international forest offsets in the California carbon market, some examples

Brazil: Letter of the Indigenous Peoples to the governments of Germany and California

Chiefs and leaders of indigenous peoples in Acre published a letter on May 9, 2019, addressed to the governments of Germany and California, reporting that millionaire funds are coming to the state of Acre for REDD and PES payments, without transparency and benefiting few indigenous people. They demand a moratorium on these payments and an urgent meeting of the governments with them, so that they can receive all the information about these transfers.

At the same time, it is very worrisome that only one day after the letter got published, the main organization in support to the indigenous peoples without demarcated territory, CIMI- regional office of West Amazon, got its office invaded and only a laptop got stolen with information of the organization's activities and leaving a knife on the table in a clear attempt to intimidate the activities of CIMI. See this article in Portuguese for more information and also here (in English) about the struggle of forests peoples against the REDD program in Acre.

For further information, read ["An even more inconvenient truth. Why Carbon Credits For Forest Preservation May Be Worse Than Nothing"](#).

Letter of the Indigenous Peoples with no territory demarcated from the Acre state and the South of Amazonas state

To: the governments that support projects to commodify nature in the state of Acre and south of the state of Amazonas

We, chiefs and leaders of our Peoples: Apurinã, Apolima-Arara, Jamamadi, Jaminawa, Huni Kui, Madihá, Manshineri and Nukini, gathered in the second meeting of peoples with no territory demarcated, want to inform that the government of Acre is receiving millions in the name of Indigenous Peoples for the REDD program and for Payment of Environmental Services by way of contracts with the governments of Germany and California/USA. Few peoples have benefited. The policy implemented with this money has got to a few communities through third parties, reaching out to a minority of the population and creating conflicts between

the Peoples and the Indigenous Movement.

Due to this we demand from the governments of Germany and California to suspend immediately these contracts and to schedule a meeting with the leaders signing this letter, as well as with other Peoples that are not represented here now, with the objective to be heard and to receive clarifications about the investments of funds transferred to the state of Acre for the indigenous peoples.

May 9, 2019.

Signatures attached to this letter:

Ilson Silvestre Souza Nukini
Francisco Saldanha Jaminawa
Ocirlene Batista de Araújo
Francisco Siqueira Arara
José Souza da Silva Jamamadi
Lauro N. S Jaminawa
Antônio Aurora J.
Alan Resibeiro Jorge
Jacinto Eridio da Silva
José Kulina
Francisco da Silva Apurinã
José Pequeno da Silva
Marina Martins
Maria Estefânia Rodrigues de Souza Kaxinawá
Valcenir Mateus Kaxinawá
Rociclei Souza da Silva Apurinã
Rosângela Conceição dos Santos
Arimar Correia da Silva
Ninawá Inu Txupani Nunes Huni Kui
Letícia L. Yawanawa

Brazil: Sena Madureira Declaration, June 17, 2018

People from the forests gathered in Sena Madureira, Acre, to denounce the false solutions of green capitalism and demand their right to their lands. The Jaminawa's regain of their territory was celebrated as an example of the power of the peoples union.

Published by [Friends of the Earth Brazil](#)

Between June 15 and 17, 2018, indigenous peoples and communities who live and work in the forest gathered in Sena Madureira, Acre, to denounce the false solutions proposed by green capitalism for environmental and climatic degradation – paradoxically caused by the capitalist logic of unsustainable production and consumption itself. Projects that believe in the fallacious principle that it is possible to continue polluting the earth, water and atmosphere in a certain point of the planet, while “compensating” for this pollution by maintaining forests in another, were denounced. Other than impossible, these measures also end up hampering populations that do relate to forests in a balanced way – indigenous and small local communities – who end up losing autonomy over their territories, their production capability and their subsistence.

The state of Acre is seen as a “laboratory” for these green capitalism “compensation” policies. There, traditional communities are suffering at the hands of these REDD, REDD+, REM or PES projects – a pack of complicated acronyms that stand for a group of even more complicated names: REDD stands for “Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation”; REM stands for “REDD Early Movers”, and PES means “Payment for Environmental Services”. All that these acronyms and names have in common are its measures of green capitalism to continue to pollute freely, at the expense of the rights of indigenous and traditional populations, who, when deceived to accept such projects, lose their rights over their lands.

In sum, polluter governments and companies from the global north buy “pollution credits”, taking away from communities from the south their right to manage their own land: they buy the right to continue polluting by violating rights elsewhere, hence disregarding other peoples sovereignty over their territory. They privatise and financialise nature. They hinder local land usage, fishing and planting, thus hindering the survival of these people. They confuse communities with strange terms, making use of a language alien to people, and seduce them with false promises – confuse to divide, divide to dominate: that is how green capitalism works. But in Sena Madureira, just as previously in Xapuri, the forest peoples revealed the antidote to these attacks: unite to resist, resist to set free.

As if to emphasize the importance of this meeting, while the dialogue took place in Sena Madureira, the aviation companies met in Montreal, Canada, to discuss those “compensation” measures, which in no way reduce pollution levels and which cause violations of rights in the territories where are implemented. The expansion of airports in the world and the highly polluting air industry has also been criticized, and is an example of how the “compensation” logic works: despite all the inflicted rights violations, companies maintain their “green speech” as if they were actually addressing the problems that they themselves create. In Porto Alegre,

for example, Fraport, a German company that operates the local airport, plans to eject Vila Nazaré, which has been in the region for 60 years, so that it can extend the runway for a few hundred meters. The expulsion of people, as usual, occurs in a violent and arbitrary manner, without any transparency in the process – against the will of Vila Nazaré’s community. On the one hand, a community being expelled from its land for the expansion of an airport; on the other, populations losing the right to their territory due to “compensation” projects; in the middle, a destructive logic, where companies attack rights at all ends and harm the forest peoples and also the peoples of the cities – a logic against which these peoples rise.

Read below the full document produced at the meeting in Sena Madureira, attended by the indigenous Apurinã, Huni Kui, Jaminawa, Nawa, Nukini, Jamamadi, Manchineri, Ashaninka do Envira and Yawanawa, by representatives of traditional communities in the interior of Acre, by rubber tappers from Xapuri, among many organisations from various states (Amazonas, Mato Grosso, Rio Grande do Sul and Rondônia) such as Friends of the Earth Brazil, the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI), the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation and the World Forests Movement (WRM).

Sena Madureira Declaration, 17th of June, 2018

We, the inhabitants of the forest, the rubber tappers, the Apurinã, Huni Kui, Jaminawa, Nawa, Nukini, Jamamadi, Manchineri, Ashaninka do Envira and Yawanawa indigenous people here present, the members of solidarity organisations from various states of Brazil (such as Acre, Amazonas, Mato Grosso, Rio Grande do Sul and Rondônia) and the university professors gathered from June 15 to 17, 2018 in Sena Madureira, Acre – ancestral land of the Jaminawa people – for the “Fourth Meeting of Capacity Building and Articulation of Forest Peoples in Confronting False Solutions”, hereby declare:

- We undergird the demands and denunciations of the Xapuri Declaration, in particular the rejection of green capitalism’s false solutions, such as REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation), PES (Payment for Environmental Services), logging, as well as any measure of climate or environmental “compensation” through the purchase of pollution credits or similar;
- Committed to the Xapuri Declaration, we carry forward the spirit of unity among peoples and the strength to face the “solutions” offered by capitalism to the crises caused by capitalism itself;
- The Jaminawa’s regain and occupation of their ancestral territories – Cayapucã, São Paulino and Caieté – serves as an example of this union’s power and strength to face the attacks of the capitalist muscle against the peoples. This victory invigorates and empowers each and every one of us – communities, peoples and organizations present – taking our common struggle forward;
- We emphasize the importance of the words of Pope Francis in the Encyclical *Laudato-Si* (paragraph 171): “The strategy of buying and selling “carbon credits” can lead to a new form of speculation which would not help reduce the emission of polluting gases worldwide. This system seems to provide a quick and easy solution under the guise of a certain commitment to the environment, but in no way does it allow for the radical change which present circumstances require. Rather, it may

simply become a ploy which permits maintaining the excessive consumption of some countries and sectors.”

– Likewise, we highlight the condemnation of nature financialisation measures contained in paragraph 11 of the Declaration of the Alliance of Guardians and Children of Mother Earth (November 28, 2015), which says, regarding the primary forest areas of the planet which are traditionally under the care of indigenous peoples: “These ecosystems must not be used as part of a carbon market mechanism that quantifies and commodifies Mother Earth, branded as payment for ecosystem services, carbon trading, carbon offsets, carbon pricing, REDD, CDM, biodiversity offsets and financialisation of Nature; turning nature into “units” to be sold in financial markets.”

– We reject the REM (REDD Early Movers) program, funded by the German public bank KfW, which induces communities to accept the logic of green capitalism and uses the state of Acre, improperly, as an example of “success” in sustainable development. In fact, the program divides communities and threatens peoples’ autonomy over land use in their own territories, jeopardizing their food sovereignty and their traditional customs and knowledge. These same problems can happen in Mato Grosso, a state where recently the program has started being implemented;

– In addition, the money from these projects does not respond to the wishes and needs of indigenous and traditional populations, such as the demarcation of indigenous lands and land regularisation of small farmers in areas affected by measures of green capitalism. Even today there is no transparency on how such resources are applied, as we have already denounced in the Xapuri Declaration. We demand that Federal prosecutors hold projects accountable;

– We disallow any policy built within offices without prior consultation (in accordance with ILO Convention 169) and participation of indigenous and traditional populations. Any definition of measures that concern these populations must start from the bottom, from within the communities;

– We offer solidarity to the peoples of all the states of Brazil and the countries of the global South that suffer this same violence from green capitalism; we urge the peoples of the northern countries not to fall for the “green speech” tricks of companies, governments and NGOs and question financial investments such as the REM program and the Amazon Fund, among others;

– We vehemently reject the persecution, defamation and criminalization of the defenders of the territories, who have the courage to express and denounce the attacks of the promoters of green capitalism.

Lastly, strengthened by the exchange of experiences among the most varied peoples during these three days, we continue to hold our heads high, believing that if we stand united, we have all the conditions to fight against the false solutions of green capitalism and to build alternative forms of sustainable life in the territories, respecting peoples’ plurality. We invite all peoples of the forests and communities who suffer the violations of this inhuman and predatory system to, together with us, follow a path through which it can be possible to overcome the destructive logic of capital.

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Brazil: Indigenous Peoples from Acre declare their rejection of REDD policies and their support to CIMI

Indigenous Peoples from Acre in Brazil declare their rejection of REDD policies and their support for the work carried out by the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI). Feijó, State of Acre, Brazil, September 28th, 2017.

Letter of rejection and request for clarification

We, indigenous peoples of four different ethnic groups, Shanenawa, Huni Kui, Ashaninka and Madiha, together with the colonheiros (small-scale peasants), seringueiros (rubber tappers), and riverside dwellers of the high and low River Envira, as well as the River Jurupari communities Santo Antônio, Paumaripé and Valparaíso, the rubber tappers associations MASSIPIRA and Novo Oriente, and people living along federal and state highways, gathered in Feijó on the 27th and 28th September 2017. We renounce the letter of accusation and persecution against the CIMI (Indigenist Missionary Council) published on 31st July on the CPI Acre website under the title “Open Letter in Response to Declarations about SISA, REDD+ and Indigenous Peoples in Acre”.

We declare that we are extremely grateful for the work they carry out in support of indigenous populations and communities, whereas we renounce any action against the indigenous populations’ welfare, taking into account that we are aware of the CIMI’s transparent work in relation to indigenous issues in the River Envira area and the whole of Brazil.

Through all the Brazilian bureaucracy, we, indigenous peoples and other traditional communities demand respect for our originality, humility and wisdom in recognising the true value of Amazonia in and for our lives. For this, it is extremely necessary for everyone to know that we, indigenous peoples, were very happy before the arrival of the Portuguese in our country of origin, Brazil. We are aware that we have many rights, as we have duties, which have to be exercised. However, we know that things have to happen with transparency and honesty.

We, indigenous peoples, demand that legal accounting be carried out of all resources of any kind destined to our indigenous and riverside communities, with the aim of improving the relationship between the state authorities and members of the communities.

We take great care of preserving human life, for we preserve the environment as part of our way of life; we are aware that all we need to survive with our families in harmony is that our lands are demarcated so we can plant and gather our traditional food, and that our governing authorities work with transparency regarding indigenous issues. We realize that lack of honesty has existed since the times when Pedro Alvarez Cabral traded gold for a piece of mirror; ever since those times, authorities haven’t found the true essence of governing with honesty and transparency and in good faith.

Feijo, September 28th, 2017

[Watch video](#) | [Read online](#)

Motion of rejection and solidarity with local leaders facing threats in Acre, Brazil

More than 80 organizations and individuals from all over the world sent today the letter enclosed below to relevant authorities in Brazil, Germany and California / USA rejecting “any and all attempts to intimidate or censor people and organizations that critique and oppose the environmental and climate policies implemented by the Acre government.”

In the letter the organizations and individuals reaffirm their “solidarity with all those who suffer threats or retaliation because of their firm political stance to defend their territories against the incessant exploitation of capital: You are not alone!”

August 3rd, 2017

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Mary Nichols, Chair California Air Resources Board
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Rajinder Sahota, Assistant Division Chief Cap-and-Trade Program

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cc: Jason Gray, Branch Chief Cap-and-Trade Program, jason.gray@arb.ca.gov

cc: Veronica Eady, Assistant Executive Officer, Environmental Justice,
Veronica.Eady@arb.ca.gov

cc: Office of the CARB Ombudsman, ombcomm@arb.ca.gov

cc: La Ronda Bowen, Ombudsman – ombudsman@arb.ca.gov

Minister Dr. Gerd Müller, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), gerd.mueller@bmz.bund.de | Cc: Lena Siciliano Brêtas, lena.bretas@bmz.bund.

de

Ministerin Dr. Barbara Hendricks, Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz, Bau und Reaktorsicherheit (BMUB), barbara.hendricks@bundestag.de

cc: Programmbüro Internationale Klimaschutzinitiative,
programmbuero@programmbuero-klima.de

Motion of rejection and solidarity with local leaders facing threats in Acre, Brazil

From May 26-28, 2017, a gathering was held in Xapuri, in the state of Acre, Brazil, around “the effects of environmental and climate policies on traditional peoples.” In addition to the publication of the [Xapuri Declaration](#), videos were disseminated with statements from indigenous leaders, seringueiros (rubber tappers) and other participants at the event. Since then, many of those leaders have been pressured and threatened by the „owners of power in Acre“.

Outraged by this latest aggression against the rights of peoples and communities that live in and depend on forests, those of us who participated in the aforementioned gathering—and those who support Amazonian peoples and communities’ struggles—express our vehement rejection of any and all attempts to intimidate or censor people and organizations that critique and oppose the environmental and climate policies implemented by the Acre government.

We specifically denounce and reject attempts by the Acre government, and non-governmental organizations associated with it, to slander such critics—in particular their claim that critics’ questioning could make it impossible to receive resources that could benefit the people of Acre’s forest. We know that the government has sufficient resources to protect the rights and serve the true interests of indigenous peoples and local communities. There is no need to put these peoples and communities’ futures at risk through questionable and nebulous projects. The government must act transparently in investing the resources it has already received through such projects, disclosing who the true beneficiaries are.

We demand that the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) cease to intimidate officials who participate in these civil society discussions and meetings. We also demand that FUNAI fulfill its mission, which is to protect and promote the rights of indigenous peoples. With its intimidations, FUNAI is once again harming these indigenous people’s rights to free expression.

We understand that, as the bankruptcy of the underlying model of the environmental and climate policies and projects in question becomes more obvious, those whose private interests are intertwined with such policies and projects tend to defend them in increasingly repressive and violent ways. As the philosopher Paul Valer once said: “He who cannot attack the argument attacks the arguer.”

We cannot tolerate these continued attacks! That is why we reiterate our support for the Xapuri Declaration. We reaffirm our solidarity with all those who suffer threats or retaliation because of their firm political stance to defend their territories against the incessant exploitation of capital: You are not alone!

Rettet den Regenwald e. V.; Alemanha
 Forum Ökologie & Papier; Alemanha
 Down to Earth Consult; Alemanha
 Amigos de la Tierra Argentina; Argentina
 Friends of the Earth Australia; Australia
 Red de Comunicaciones Indigenas Apachita;
 Bolivia
 Center for Environment from Bosnia and
 Herzegovina; Bosnia
 Conselho Indigenista Missionário (CIMI); Brasil
 Fórum Mudanças Climáticas e Justiça Social; Brasil
 Equipo Itinerante Manaus y Equipo Itinerante
 BOLPEBRA; Brasil
 Instituto Agrario de Chimoio-Manica; Brasil
 Associação Movimento Paulo Jackson – Ética,
 Justiça, Cidadania (Bahia); Brasil
 Articulação Antinuclear Brasileira; Brasil
 Comissão Paroquial de Meio Ambiente de Caetité
 (Caetité – Bahia); Brasil
 FASE Bahia; Brasil
 Centro de Estudos e Defesa do Negro do Pará –
 CEDENPA; Brasil
 Centro de Educação, Pesquisa e Assessoria Sindical
 e Popular – CEPASP; Brasil
 Coordenação nacional de articulação das
 comunidades negras rural quilombolas (CONAQ);
 Brasil
 CDDH Marçal de Souza Tupã-i; Brasil
 Comissão Pastoral da Terra – CPT-Nacional;
 Brasil
 Terra de Direitos; Brasil
 Conselho de gestão kaapor; Brasil
 Aliança RECOs – Redes de Cooperação
 Comunitária Sem Fronteiras; Brasil
 Movimento Mulheres pela P@ZI; Brasil
 INSTITUTO AMAZÔNIA SOLIDÁRIA (IAMAS);
 Brasil
 Pastoral nacional da Mulher Marginalizada – SP;
 Brasil
 Justiça Global; Brasil
 Fórum de Direitos Humanos e da Terra MT; Brasil
 Centro Burnier Fé e Justiça; Brasil
 O Movimento dos Pequenos Agricultores – MPA;
 Brasil
 FAMOC – Federação das Associações de
 Moradores de Cariacica; Brasil
 O Instituto Madeira Vivo; Brasil
 Aliança dos Rios Panamazonicos; Brasil
 Aliança dos 4 Rios da Amazonia: Madeira, Teles
 Pires, Tapajós e Xingu; Brasil
 Núcleo de Pesquisa Estado, Sociedade e
 Desenvolvimento na Brasil
 Amazônia Ocidental (NUPESDAO-UFAC)
 Amigos da Terra Brasil; Brasil
 Combate Racismo Ambiental; Brasil
 Red de Accion por los Derechos Ambientales
 (RADA); Chile
 Censat Agua Viva, Amigos de la Tierra Colombia
 COECOCEIBA; Amigos de la Tierra Costa Rica
 Costa Rica
 Red de Coordinación en Biodiversidad;
 Costa Rica
 Asociación Conservacionista YISKI; Costa Rica
 Accion Ecologica de Ecuador
 Cesta – Amigos de la Tierra; El Salvador
 Salva la Selva; España
 Asociación galega Cova Crea; España
 Ecologistas en Acción; España
 Friends of the Earth – US Eua
 Clean Energy Alliance; Eua
 Global Justice Ecology Project; Eua
 Indigenous Environmental Network; Eua
 WilderUtopia; Eua
 The Environmental Justice Coalition for Water; Eua
 Physicians for Social Responsibility; Los Angeles;
 Eua
 Oakland Climate Action Coalition; Eua
 New Wind Association; Finlandia
 Emmaus Aurinkotehdas ry; Finlandia
 Friends of the Earth Finland; Finlandia
 Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña
 OFRANEH; Honduras
 Clifton Justice and Peace Commission;
 Inglaterra
 Amigos de la Tierra Internacional; Internacional
 World Rainforest Movement; Internacional
 Consumers’ Association of Penang (CAP); Malasia
 Borneo Project; Malasia
 Movimiento Mesoamericano contra el Modelo
 extractivo Minero – M4; México
 Otros Mundos A.C./Amigos de la Tierra México
 Medio Ambiente y Sociedad, A.C.; México
 U Yits Ka’an, La Escuela de Agricultura Ecológica
 de Maní Yucatán; México
 Organización Campesina de Producción Por Un
 Mundo Mejor OCPMM; México
 Justicia Ambiental/FOE; Moçambique
 Human Rights Organization of Nepal (HURON);
 Nepal
 Social Action;Nigeria
 Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF);
 Nigeria
 Colectivo Voces Ecológicas COVEC; Panamá
 Lucha indígena; Peru
 The Corner House; Reino Unido
 EcoNexus; Reino Unido
 (And more)

[Read the complete list online](#)

Xapuri Declaration, May 28, 2017

We, forest dwellers, rubber tappers, Apurinã, Huni Kui, Jaminawa, Manchineri and Shawadawa indigenous people, members of supportive organizations and the Jesuit Travelling Team, teachers from different universities, united in the city of Xapuri in the Brazilian state of Acre from 26 to 28 May 2017, at the meeting “The effects of environmental / climatic policies on traditional populations”, declare:

– That, at this moment of resurgence, we are unifying the struggles of indigenous peoples and rubber tappers in the same cause. Our union is our main weapon against capital.

– That, aware of the history of resistance of the forest peoples and the legacy of Chico Mendes, we will stand firm in the defense of our territories. Like the ones that preceded us, we will continue to oppose attempts to expropriate our ways of life. We demand the demarcation and recognition of our rights to land and territory.

– We reject the ongoing initiatives materialized in policies that aim to convey our territories to private capital groups, including ranchers and loggers. We are concerned about the lack of transparency and the way that different mechanisms have been put forward, including payments for environmental services such as REDD and its variations, unsustainable forest management plans and mechanisms foreseen in the new Brazilian Forest Code, many of which are imposed through intimidation, blackmail, negotiations under false pretences and with bad faith.

– We express our indignation about the false solutions, which legitimize the continuity and expansion of a socially and environmentally destructive model. We reject initiatives to offset pollution. We do not accept mechanisms based on restrictions on our way of life, and we express solidarity with people living in the areas that are contaminated by companies seeking compensation (offsets). We stand by the people from other countries who live in the areas impacted by the pollution generated by destructive companies. No one should live in contaminated areas; it is time to end all kinds of racism, including environmental racism.

– We are being harmed by the arrangements and negotiations between the government of Acre and other states and countries in favor of corporations eager for pollution credits, including oil and mining companies, loggers and agribusiness companies. We are concerned about ongoing talks about aviation emissions compensation through Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation of Tropical Forests, the so-called REDD mechanisms. We refuse to use the term carbon credits, understanding that they are actually pollution credits, which aggravate rather than solve the problem. We reject any form of climate colonialism.

– We express total solidarity with women and men who, forced to fulfill impossible prerogatives, get fined, criminalized, indebted, without conditions to maintain their ways of life, trapped in schemes that refer back to semi-slavery and debt bondage of rubber tappers in colonial times. We also express solidarity with the residents of the rubber tree areas Valparaíso and Russas, who, coerced to submit to a REDD project, are threatened with expropriation of the lands that are

rightfully theirs.

– Solidarity to the native community of Nova Oecania, of the Upper Tauhamanu River, in the municipality of Iberia, Peru. Our brothers and sisters Pyru Yini and other communities in isolation face the advance of deforestation, driven by timber concessions, which rely on the direct participation of businesspersons from Acre and others. These groups are involved in REDD projects and, while brokering international agreements with the support of Brazilian authorities, maintain predatory practices. We share the complaint that a village was destroyed, with 18 houses burned, in July 2014, with absolutely no action taken by the authorities, in an episode stained by impunity.

– We call on other rural and urban working people to reject this destructive pattern, marked by inequality and violation of the rights of indigenous peoples and traditional communities. We reiterate our unity in the struggle and willingness to resist to the end. Chico Mendes lives, not in the actions of governmental marketing, but in the struggle of the forest peoples.

[Read online](#)

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REDD – Brazil: Open letter from Acre challenges legitimacy of REDD+ “consultation” in California

Organizations and individuals in the state of Acre and other states in Brazil sent an open letter this month to the governor of California and the California REDD Offset Working Group, challenging the legitimacy of a “consultation” carried out – through three workshops in California and over the internet, in English – regarding the inclusion of REDD offsets, primarily from Acre, in California’s carbon trading scheme. As of April 30, 2013, the working group will consider this “consultation” to be concluded and will submit its recommendations to the government of California.

The initiative to include REDD offsets in California’s cap-and-trade system stems from an agreement signed in 2010 by the governors of California (USA), Acre (Brazil) and Chiapas (Mexico), under which Acre and Chiapas would “supply” carbon offset credits generated by REDD+ projects, while polluting industries in California would benefit from these credits by purchasing the “right” to continue polluting.

The open letter from Acre and Brazil stresses, first of all, that this entire process is illegitimate: “As organizations and activists based in Acre and Brazil, (...) we are writing to you to express our opposition to the proposal of the government of the U.S. state of California to ‘reduce’ its CO₂ emissions through the acquisition of REDD+ offsets from the states of Acre and Chiapas, instead of pursuing emissions reductions in California itself. In addition to our opposition to this proposal, we also challenge the legitimacy of the ‘consultation’ process underway in California with regard to this matter, due to the lack of effective participation by the communities in Acre and Chiapas who depend on the forests to maintain their way of life and will be directly affected by this REDD+ proposal.”

The open letter also emphasizes that the “green” image presented to the world of Acre as a model of “sustainability” and of how REDD+ projects can be carried out in tropical rainforests – often using the figure and ideals of Chico Mendes to back up this image – is in fact a far cry from the reality in the state. “REDD+ will not effectively reduce global carbon emissions, and much less the destruction of the world’s forests; it deepens existing social and environmental injustice; it criminalizes the traditional practices of forest peoples and communities; and it is a profoundly neocolonial initiative.”

The letter recommends that the government of California cancel the illegitimate consultation process currently underway, “unless it undertakes, in the near future, a wide-reaching consultation with the parties affected in the territories from which it plans to obtain REDD offset credits.”

A large group of international organizations and individuals have endorsed the open letter and have sent a statement of solidarity, which declares: “Decisions regarding REDD+ legislation or programmes already do and will in future affect forest peoples’ way of life. Given that such meaningful participation was absent from REDD+ processes in Acre or during the elaboration of recommendations to

the government of California in this matter, we urge you not to include REDD offset credits into the California carbon trading scheme.”

The statement continues: “We also share the additional concerns on the REDD+ mechanism and support the demand made in the Open Letter that California should not include REDD offsets credits from Acre in its carbon trading scheme, and rather engage in efforts to reduce emissions at home.”

Download here the full texts of the [open letter](#) and [statement of solidarity](#).

[Read the article online](#)

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4. Further readings

[Aviation and false solutions: The farce of the “Florestal Santa Maria” REDD project in Mato Grosso, Brazil](#)

This REDD+ project covers almost 70,000 hectares and has sold carbon credits to offset programs advertised by at least two airline companies: Delta Airlines and TAP. Yet, behind this is an increase in deforestation in the region, a history of land grabbing, the use of certifications that no longer exist and unfulfilled promises to local communities.

[Continued Destruction of forests and biodiversity in the state of Acre, considered a model of the ‘Green Economy’ in the Brazilian Amazon](#)

[Voices of local communities in Acre denounce violations in Community-based Sustainable Forest Management](#)

[Forest Peoples and territories: Rights Violations in Acre, Brazil](#)

[REDD: A collection of conflicts, contradictions and lies](#)

[Acre, Brasil: Uma história de desmatamento, redução de desmatamento e, agora, REDD \(available only in Portuguese\)](#)

[Trinta anos pos-assassinato de Chico Mendes e destruição oculta de florestas e vidas no Acre, Rio Branco, 2018 \(available in Portuguese\)](#)

[REDD+, the carbon market and California-Acre-Chiapas cooperation: Legalizing mechanisms of dispossession, Friends of the Earth International, 2017.](#)

[More articles from the WRM Bulletin on REDD+](#)

[REDD moves from forests to landscapes: More of the same, just bigger and with bigger risk to cause harm | From WRM Bulletin 204, August 2014.](#)

[“Sustainable Forest Landscapes”: A new frontier for the commodification of nature | From WRM Bulletin 198, February 2014.](#)

[Nigeria. Forests to the highest bidder in Nigeria: how REDD proves unable to stop deforestation | From WRM Bulletin 222, March 2016](#)

[Nigeria. The unequal and perverse exchange between Nigeria and colonialist](#)

corporate powers: from fossil fuels to industrial oil palm plantations and REDD
From WRM Bulletin 196, December 2013.

Indonesia. The REDD Ulu Masen project in Indonesia: like selling air
From WRM Bulletin 202, June 2014.

Mexico, Lacandon Rainforest: Montes Azules REDDeldía Movement
From WRM Bulletin 201, May 2014.

Peru. Masking the Destruction: REDD+ in the Peruvian Amazon
From WRM Bulletin 208, December 2014.

Peru: REDD+ places the Amazon rainforest and biodiversity at the service of the
financial market | From WRM Bulletin 190, May 2013.

About the World Rainforest Movement (WRM)

The World Rainforest Movement is an international initiative set up in 1986 by activists from different countries to facilitate, support and reinforce the struggle against deforestation and land grabbing in countries with forests and forest-dependent communities. In a gender sensitive way, it aims to assist communities in their struggle to secure access and control over their lands, forests and livelihoods. The WRM supports efforts that defend forests and forest-dependent communities from commercial logging, dams, mining, tree plantations, shrimp farms, agribusiness, as well as other forest preservation-type projects that threaten them, like REDD+ and other offset projects that are part of the increasing trend of commodifying nature.

About the WRM Bulletin

The electronic bulletin of the WRM is intended as a tool to support the struggles of peoples defending their lands and forests as well as to give visibility to the voices of many resistance struggles. Furthermore, the bulletin aims to inform and alert on international initiatives dealing with forests that might have impacts and risks for forest-dependant peoples and other populations. It has been published since 1997 and is currently distributed in four languages: Spanish, English, French and Portuguese.

To receive the WRM bulletin and other relevant information, you can subscribe at:
<http://eepurl.com/8YPw5> Subscription is free.



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