



Offsets in the forests

A logic that violates indigenous and traditional peoples' rights while facilitating further deforestation



Xapuri (Acre, Brazil), December 2018.

A compilation of articles from the
World Rainforest Movement Bulletin (WRM)

October 2019

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1. Introduction

Acre is a relatively small state in the western Brazilian Amazon, on the border with Peru and Bolivia. The state is well-known as the place where Chico Mendes lived. Mendes was murdered in 1988 for his struggle for the rights of rubber tappers. He became a symbol in Brazil and the world for his struggle for social justice in the forest.

Acre has also become famous worldwide in a very different way: as a state cited as model for a so-called Green Economy in tropical forest areas. This model is built on putting a price on nature and claiming that forests in one place can be destroyed without overall damage to nature as long as they are 'recreated' elsewhere. Or that companies can continue to pollute and burn fossil fuels like petroleum and coal and yet claim to not cause climate change - as long as they pay for example, the state of Acre, for the promise to keep forests in Acre standing as a carbon store. With such a payment for what is called the "ecosystem service of carbon storage", the polluting company can claim to have compensated the climate damage caused by burning petroleum or coal. This idea is called carbon offsetting.

Buying carbon credits, or carbon offsets as they are sometimes also called, is perhaps good for the company PR but it is bad for the climate, for forests and for communities for whom the forest is home. Bad for the climate and forests, because the destruction caused by drilling and burning petroleum and coal will continue. Bad for communities for whom the forest is home because, as the articles in this compilation demonstrate, carbon offsetting brings conflict, dispossession and outside control over community forests.

The Encyclical Letter *Laudato Sí* of 2015 warns about the consequences of falling for this illusion that the climate damage from continued burning of fossil fuels can be compensated:

"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."

Acre has become an international model pioneering precisely this trade in carbon credits linked to a mechanism originally called REDD. REDD stands for Reduction of Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation). What may sound good at first sight has shown to be a very damaging idea, for the climate (because it does not help reduce emissions), for the forest (because it does not help reduce deforestation, as the many recent fires in the Amazon have shown) and for

communities for whom the forest is home (because it blames peasant farmers and indigenous peoples for deforestation, restricts their use of the forest, causes many conflicts and allows owners of REDD projects to monitor and control the use of their territory). This reality of REDD is far from the promise of benefits forest-dependent communities that can be found in the colourful PR material on REDD, distributed widely by the government of Acre and their partners like the World Bank and big conservation NGOs.

Today, this REDD idea of saving forests by selling carbon credits to polluting companies or countries who prefer not to reduce their own carbon emissions has taken on a variety of names such as 'natural climate solutions' (when we all know that the only solution to avoiding a climate crisis is to keep petroleum and coal in the ground), 'landscape restoration' or 'bio-based economy'. The names may be changing but the consequences for Amazon communities will remain the same because these remain false solutions pushed from the outside upon forest-dependent communities in the Amazon.

In the past years, communities, activists and local organizations supporting community struggles for social justice have been building – in the spirit of Chico Mendes - an alliance against the “green economy” and its compensation logic. They have documented the manifold negative impacts of this false assumption that carbon emissions from burning fossil carbon contained in petroleum, coal or gas can be compensated by paying for carbon storage in the forest in Acre.

The articles and declarations of this compilation were originally published in the bulletin and website of the World Rainforest Movement. They tell the story of how REDD is a threat for forest-dependent communities in the Amazon and has failed to help prevent deforestation. Several articles address specific struggles of communities in Acre to defend their forests and territories from destruction and from REDD.

Say no to the false solution of carbon offsetting and REDD!

2. Compilation of WRM bulletin articles

The “Green Economy”: giving immunity to criminals

[From WRM Bulletin 222, March 2016](#)

Policies and plans implementing the “Green Economy” are not about transforming the current damaging economy into a non-damaging one, but about (re)creating “nature” itself, which reinforces the colonial understanding of “nature” as a collection of species, undisturbed by human interaction. Allowing destructive activities to expand without violating any law, exacerbates even further the threats to forests and the people for whom these forests sustain their way of life.

*“The goal is to transform environmental legislation into tradeable instruments”
Pedro Moura, founder of EcoSecurities, a carbon offsets company, and creator and director of the “Bolsa Verde Rio”, Brasil’s green exchange stock market (1)*

For over a decade, key national and international policy debate, aiming to introduce a new economic value to nature, has been re-defining forests as providers of “ecosystem services”. Promotional videos, slogans and attractive brochures promoting a “Green Economy”, repeat over and over how forests and biodiversity are essential for the “services” they provide to humanity. Policies and plans implementing the “Green Economy” are not about transforming the current damaging economy into a non-damaging one, but about something very different, about (re)creating “nature” itself. This new “nature” of the Green Economy reinforces the colonial understanding of “nature” as a collection of species, undisturbed by human interaction. This new “nature” denies even more the role of forest peoples in shaping nature over millennia, and puts “nature” at the service of the same economy that continues to destroy just as before. The result is a re-definition that reduces the underlying causes of the destruction of forests and other territories into an issue of numbers and units. In turn, technical discourses over how to measure each “service” and how to “compensate for” or “restore” the “unavoidable” destruction of “nature as a service provider” contribute to the creation of a smokescreen. These discourses silence the crucial issues of power relations and injustices inherent to the economic system, including the underlying causes of forest destruction and violation of forest and traditional communities’ rights. People, cultures, traditions, interconnections, among many other aspects in

forests and territories, are not even considered as co-existing and inseparable with forests.

The concept of “nature as a service provider” is central for the “Green Economy”. For this logic to function, “services” must be precisely defined and quantified, priced, marketed and traded (2). “Nature” must be re-defined as a collection of “ecosystem services” that can be measured, and different, unique habitats, territories and localities are spilt into units that can be shown to be “equivalent” in terms of their number and quantities of “ecosystem services”. It is based on the conversion of nature’s functions, cycles and capacities that are useful to humans into “services”, including water regulation, carbon storage, habitat for diverse species that in turn provide e.g. pollination of crops, etc. This has many parallels with the process where human work was turned into wage labour. Some aspects of nature that were previously not used as part of capital circulation are drawn into capital markets and the capital market logic. Even though the process of extracting marketable assets out of “nature” is old, there are new elements to the current attempts of turning “ecosystem services” into an asset. New in the sense that “nature’s” newly defined “services” are now being “packaged” into a number of measurable units or “assets” that allow comparison, compensation and trade. These “services” do not need to be extracted in order to be marketed, as with timber, minerals, etc. For example, saving a certain quantity of “biodiversity” in a forest at risk of being destroyed can be used to “compensate” for the destruction of an “equivalent” quantity of “biodiversity” in a “comparable” forest area elsewhere. Therefore, this creates a new way to extract from “nature”: the absence of an activity that would destroy the “service” or the (re)creation of an area “equivalent” to the one that would be destroyed.

This “new economy with nature” is a process that is advancing with persistence and that is pursued by many actors as a means to different, even contradicting, ends. Among these are those actors that truly believe that by quantifying and pricing “nature” it can be saved from destruction, like some academics for example; others, like banks and brokers, have jumped in the boat for making financial gains out of the transactions of the newly created “assets”; the consultancy industry is profiting from this “new economy with nature” which requires many technical documents, certifications and auditing services; corporations in the extractive industries, agribusiness and infrastructure sectors are also powerful actors which directly benefit from this agenda: offering a way out from dealing with the destruction they create while receiving a “green” image for continue business as usual; and so on and so forth. And while some of these ends are advertised and thus publicly known through nice propagandas, others are carefully hidden. However, it is important to acknowledge the diverse agendas of the many actors active in re-defining nature, as considering only some of these motivations can easily prevent us from understanding why this idea has gained such prominence.

Conservation NGOs, ecologists, ecological economists, developmental cooperation agencies and banks, the World Bank and UN agencies have been crucial in assisting with the technical methodologies and delivering the “desired” image of nature. Mechanisms under the “Green Economy”, like REDD or biodiversity

offsets, are top-down approaches which ensure that the power of how to define “nature”, how to “value” it and how to “protect” it remains in the same corporate and state hands that allowed and benefited from its degradation.

Consequently, a crucial point also for these actors (World Bank, UN agencies, conservation NGOs, etc.) is that governments revise their environmental legislation and regulations and create a legal basis for the compensation mechanisms proposed under the “Green Economy”. It is evident that, generally, laws with the potential to protect forests and peoples’ territories have shown to be easily broken or ignored when powerful interests are in play. Nonetheless, allowing destructive activities to expand legally, that is, without violating any law, exacerbates even further the threats to forests and the people for whom these forests sustain their way of life and provide their livelihoods.

Illusive limits: an open door for forest destruction

Immunity, according to the Oxford dictionary, means “protection or exemption from something, especially an obligation or penalty” (3). The changes to environmental accords, legislation and regulations that introduce compensation mechanisms such as REDD or biodiversity offsets – allow governments to limit nature’s destruction or pollution while at the same time enabling companies to legally ignore such limits, for example, when offsetting is introduced as one way of “achieving” these limits. In other words, the corporations, financial institutions and other actors behind the destruction of forests, biodiversity and forest peoples’ territories are being granted with a type of immunity: an exemption to the criminal acts they are responsible for when their operations destroy forests and territories. In this context, governments revising legislation all over the world are accepting the destruction of “ecosystem services” in areas previously protected, considered as ‘critical habitat’ or where destruction would have faced significant opposition and criticism – as long as the loss of a specific “ecosystem service” is compensated for elsewhere. Numerous international, national and sub-national initiatives are underway that highlight the diverse approaches that attempt to (re)create nature as a “service provider” (See article of this bulletin “Environmental regulation in the Green Economy”).

Besides the legal changes, investment criteria of multilateral banks such as the regional developmental banks or the World Bank also aim to influence environmental legislation. The International Finance Corporation (IFC), the private arm of the World Bank, changed its Performance Standard Number 6 in 2012. Every company that wants an IFC loan and will destroy what the IFC considers “critical habitat” through its operations has to present a biodiversity offset plan, that is, a plan stating that the destroyed biodiversity will be compensated for elsewhere. With investments in over 100 countries, this “standard” allows the continuation of extractive industries while linking extraction with the (re)creation of nature as a provider of “ecosystem services”. This trend also threatens to facilitate extractive industries pursuing operations in protected areas.

Why is this transformation so crucial now?

The limits imposed by existing environmental legislation have increasingly become a problem for corporations to continue “business-as-usual”, either for carrying out their activities or for keeping their image intact. While on the one hand, companies and industries demand action to ease access to remaining areas of interest to them, an increasing part of society demands limits to the continued destruction. For politicians and investors, offsets are therefore an instrument that helps them out of a dilemma: citizens increasingly demand limits on destruction and pollution and call for the restoration of already damaged territories. At the same time, corporations demand that such limits not interrupt their business unduly and that such limits can be ignored where they would restrict corporate expansion. Legislation and regulation including offsets makes this possible: A company can ignore the limit in one place while pretending to comply with the limit through purchase of an offset credit. Environmental laws that include limits at the same time as they include the instrument to legally ignore such limits by promising “conservation”, “compensation” or “restoration” elsewhere are therefore the logical consequences.

What is crucial to recognise is that the “new economy with nature” is synonymous to an increased corporate and market control over territories since the “ecosystem service” certificates being sold need to be “protected”. REDD projects and plans have shown how very often these first blame forest loss – and thus the loss of the carbon stored in the forest – on peasant and forest communities while the corporations and government policies really responsible for large-scale deforestation continue unabated. Consequently, many denunciations of evictions, restrictions on communities’ use of their traditional forests, and even increase of pollution and deforestation in the quest of “protecting” the new “asset” are a result of projects that proclaim to reduce forest destruction (4). Besides, every offset project, apart from having an impact at the offset site, is also allowing the continuation of another destructive activity somewhere else, therefore impacting and grabbing land from yet another locality and territory. It is therefore equally crucial to monitor and denounce the effects for the forest and traditional communities on the ground.

Another crucial consequence for communities or community groups in resistance to the “Green Economy” is that these legal changes result in affected communities losing the possibility of bringing “environmental/territorial criminals” to court: When the law itself allows a company to exceed legal limits to pollution or destruction as long as additional “protection” or “re(creation)” is ensured elsewhere, such excess pollution or destruction is no longer an offence. In a nutshell, the right to ignore a legal limit can be bought. This, in turn, translates into another push to aggravate the grabbing of more territories, allowing corporate control. This new form of territorial grab through compensation measures, however, might be more difficult to grasp, because it does not require ownership or property rights to the land itself or the trees or biodiversity. It is about protecting “ecosystem services” that are converted into “asset-units”. And if (the absence of) an activity that would otherwise have harmed the “services” is what creates the asset, there has to come regular control and surveillance to make

sure the activity remains absent – nature’s “services” need to remain intact over a long period of time or the compensation loses its validity! And these new “assets” being “protected” are located in territories of peasant and forest communities, not on land occupied by corporations. As a result, peasant communities are the ones blamed for deforestation. New technologies of surveillance, such as drones, are used to monitor the new “asset” by monitoring local land use. This also leads to increased criminalization and abuse for local communities.

Consequently, it is imperative to be vigilant of this process. And to further reflect on why is it that even though no global “ecosystem services” market is in sight, the momentum for creating a “new economy with nature” remains or has even grown. Maybe the creation and trade of new assets based on “nature” was not the main motivation, but rather to be able to put more territories under the control of capital instead of communities. To pursue more changes of legislations so that limits on environmental destruction or pollution are easier to ignore without any consequence for corporations or investors appears to be a high priority of the “Green Economy”.

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(1) Environmental Finance (2011): EcoSecurities co-founder launches Brazilian environmental exchange. 20 December 2011. http://www.bvrio.org/site/images/clipping/Environmental_Finance-BVRio.pdf

(2) In 2012, WRM addressed two related topics in its February and August bulletin issues: ‘Environmental Services’ and ‘The Financialisation of Nature’.

(3) <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/immunity>

(4) <http://worm.org.uy/books-and-briefings/redd-a-collection-of-conflicts-contradictions-and-lies/>

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Brazil: Voices of local communities in Acre denounce violations in Community-based Sustainable Forest Management

[From WRM bulletin 197, December 2013](#)

The state of Acre is considered an international pioneer and model for “Community-based Sustainable Forest Management”. Logging is carried out within rubber-tapping communities, to whom this model was promoted based on the possibility of significantly increasing their income, while preserving the forest for the future generations. However, in reality, it threatens the rights of rubber tappers to maintain their ways of life and their control of the forest that they depend on for their survival.

In the business world, “sustainability” promises, among other things, that economic activity does not violate the rights of the communities affected, and that future generations will be able to continue to benefit from the natural setting where the activity is practiced. NGOs, companies and governments who promote “sustainable forest management” (SFM) claim that this is possible to achieve in tropical forests, using certification from the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) as a guarantee.

The state of Acre in the Amazon region of Brazil is considered an international pioneer and model for SFM, including “Community-based Sustainable Forest Management”. In this case, logging is carried out within the territories of rubber-tapping communities, to whom SFM was promoted with a great many promises – above all, the possibility of significantly increasing their income, while preserving the forest for future generations at the same time.

During a field visit to Acre, we listened to the stories of rubber tappers who have participated in Community-based SFM initiatives through their associations, including some in areas that have been certified by the FSC. The people we spoke to live in the Porto Dias and Chico Mendes Agro-Extractivist Settlements (PAEs). The first Community-based SFM experience took place in the Porto Dias PAE.

For this article, we decided not to reveal the identity of the majority of the people we spoke with, in order to prevent them from suffering any repercussions as a result of what they denounced: that SFM, even when it is labelled “community-based”, does not fulfil its promises, and threatens the rights of rubber tappers to maintain their ways of life and their control of the forest that they depend on for their survival.

Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) in Acre

In Acre, the coalition of political parties that has governed the state since 1999 has subscribed to the SFM concept since its inception. The current governor of the state, Tião Viana, stated in 2012 that “the forests of Acre are areas of production and wealth, with extractive characteristics, protected by the introduction of science and technology.” This could serve as the basis for creating “a dynamic and sustainable

economy for current and future generations” and for “global, intelligent and humane insertion in the world.” (1)

During the Second International Expert Meeting on Sustainable Forest Management held in Acre in 2011, which also marked the 25th anniversary of the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), Eduardo Mansur, a representative of the organization, declared that “Acre has succeeded in establishing a sustainable development model that is an example for all, because it followed sensible models of respect for the forest, and for traditional populations.” (2)

Impacts of community-based SFM on local communities

A top-down proposal

FSC Brazil claims that the search for “alternative models of sustainable development” in Acre “is rooted in the ideals of the defence of the forest and sustainable development initiated and promoted by Chico Mendes,” the world-renowned leader of the organized struggle of rubber tappers in Acre and Brazil. The name and figure of Chico Mendes are constantly used in the discourse of those who control and benefit from SFM in Acre today.

But those who fought alongside Chico Mendes in this struggle stress that his goal was the creation of territories, known as Extractivist Reserves (RESEX), where rubber tappers could carry out their activities with full autonomy and control over the territory and the forest within the reserves.

Community-based SFM emerged in Acre in the mid-1990s with the support of technicians from an NGO called the Amazon Workers’ Centre (CTA), according to a long-time rubber tapper we spoke with, who also explained that this was a top-down proposal which presented the tappers with two options: “We could go along with the legal management, or our forest would go up in smoke,” a reference to the clearing of forests due to the expansion of cattle ranching and illegal logging. To persuade the community, the technicians from the CTA promised that SFM would generate a good income, and that selective, “low-impact” logging would conserve the forest.

The state government also played a fundamental role, subsidizing Community-based SFM and FSC certification, and even using international funding to do so. In 2002, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) provided the state government of Acre with 65 million US dollars in financing for the promotion of “sustainable development”, with forest management and infrastructure identified as key “instruments” for this purpose. (4)

The main FSC-accredited certification agency in Acre, Imaflora, also made concerted efforts to convince communities to become involved in community-based SFM: “Making certification and its benefits accessible to communities and small producers, attracting them towards a model of sustainable use of the forest, is a task undertaken as a priority by Imaflora since its beginnings.” (5)

The “engineers” and companies occupy the “colocações” [rubber tappers’ family landholdings]

As one rubber tapper told us, those who come to the communities to talk about sustainable management and FSC certification “are not forest people.” They are engineers from the firms that conduct forest inventories or head up the certification process, and “when the engineers are talking, everyone stays quiet,” he added. They have brought with them to the territories of the rubber tappers, in the words of the governor of Acre, “science and technology”.

This is essentially a violation of the community’s territorial rights, because the rubber tappers are no longer able to freely use their territories. So-called Community-based SFM, and particularly when it is certified, further strengthens the voice of the engineers who say what will be done in the SFM area, without listening to the rubber tappers.

Broken promises of income

The people and institutions who convinced the communities to become involved in industrial logging activities promised them significant income in return. However, a married couple from the Chico Mendes PAE who spoke with us expressed their frustration over the small amount of money they have earned. For the extraction of timber from around 10 hectares of land, they will obtain 3,000 Brazilian reais – but they will have to wait until the end of the year to collect it, they complained, and furthermore, a percentage of the money will go to Cooperfloresta (see the box below). They emphasized that they could have earned more money from the land by gathering Brazil nuts, for example. Moreover, they told us that they have decided to pull out of the Community-based SFM initiative, but it is not that simple: they must continue for a certain amount of time in order to repay the costs of the technical work – for instance, the inventory conducted by third parties before the project began. This is part of the contract that they signed, which means that they are responsible for this debt, they say. However, there is one not-so-minor detail: they do not have a copy of the contract signed with Cooperfloresta.

Cooperfloresta

Cooperfloresta (the Community Forest Producers Cooperative) is a cooperative founded in 2005 and made up by “extractivist” families (whose traditional livelihoods depend on the extraction of non-timber forest products, such as rubber tapping and harvesting nuts and seeds), grouped into six associations, of which four have areas certified by the FSC. Cooperfloresta is responsible for selling the timber harvested by its members, seeking the best price. The cooperative has been subsidized by the government of Acre and the federal government through the Brazilian Development Bank (BNDES). (6)

According to one of the inhabitants of the Porto Dias PAE, Cooperfloresta was created in the course of a month, with little discussion, and is “more of a company than a cooperative.”

Although it is called “community-based”, Community-based SFM is an activity with industrial purposes and is increasingly carried out by companies more than by community members. While a rubber tapper receives, based on various testimonies, no more than 100 reais (roughly 42 US dollars) for a cubic metre of wood per family, a logging company in Xapuri reported that the sale of sawn timber in the port of Santos, one of Brazil’s main ports, can yield up to 2,500 US dollars per cubic metre.

A community member from the Porto Dias settlement agrees with the “engineers” that when timber is certified by the FSC it gains extra, additional value: around 240 reais (roughly 100 dollars) per cubic metre of wood, as compared to 120 reais (just over 50 dollars) per cubic metre of timber harvested from a non-certified management area. At the same time, however, he stressed that certification increases the cost of production due to the additional expenditures on consulting and auditing firms. Thus the additional income is reduced due to the additional expenses, which are charged to the families participating in SFM.

The difficulties faced, even with all of the subsidies provided by the government, have reinforced the trend of an increasing proportion of logging being carried out by companies. And another growing trend is the sale of “standing timber”. Although the earnings per hectare are lower, in this case the rubber tappers do not need to do anything more – they simply receive the amount of money per hectare agreed upon with the logging company.

The current way of life and the future of the forest and the rubber tappers under threat

A family from the Chico Mendes PAE decided to withdraw from the Community-based SFM initiative. One of the main reasons for this decision was the devastation of the forest within their *colocação* – the landholding assigned to each family within a PAE – which they traditionally used to harvest non-timber forest products. During our visit they showed us a large clearing in the middle of the forest, inside their *colocação*. A number of new roads had been opened in the forest so that the skidder, a heavy vehicle used in a logging operation for pulling cut trees out of a forest, could reach this clearing where the logs were gathered in order to be transported on trucks to the sawmill. The family noted that all of these new roads contributed to blocking the rubber trails they use for their traditional livelihood of rubber tapping.

An inhabitant of the Porto Dias PAE told us that he had left the Community-based SFM programme three years ago after he “woke up” and realized that logging work was destroying the traditional way of life of the rubber tappers: “They extract rubber and know how to sell it, they gather Brazil nuts and know how to sell them. Timber is not something for rubber tappers, it is for engineers.”

With regard to Community-based SFM, Dercy Teles recounts: “They presented the management plan didactically, meticulously, in full detail, claiming that this (logging) activity is not threatening because where there are three trees of the same species – the parent, child and grandchild – the parent is cut down

first, then the child, and then the grandchild, and during this cycle, other trees are growing. This claim is not justified, as anyone who really knows the forest could tell you.”

An inhabitant of the Porto Dias settlement pointed to the risk of a larger amount of timber being extracted, thus further increasing the impact on the forest, but noted that some are willing to take this risk because “everyone knows that timber brings in money.” The trend towards selling “standing” timber could also generate more destruction. And there is the additional risk of even more destruction resulting from a lack of adequate care taken during the cutting and transporting of the timber by outsourced workers, who are sometimes poorly trained and often employed under precarious working conditions. This has been confirmed by various FSC audit reports in the state of Acre. Meanwhile, the presence of companies and workers from outside the region has other impacts on the communities.

According to Dercy Teles: “We know that the logging is carried out by companies contracted for this purpose. The rubber tappers are merely guides. The inventory of the area is carried out by people from the outside. In addition to the damage that they cause, they also alter family relations, because they often become involved with women from the region who then leave their husbands. There are also cases of prostitution. In the community of Simintuba, the company that went to conduct the inventory disrupted the life of the community. There was an increase in prostitution – adolescent girls began to prostitute themselves when the company arrived – and marriages were broken up.”

Another Porto Dias resident said that it would be better “to leave behind the forest, the logging thing,” but complained that the government provides little incentive for this and, in general, little support for the proposals of the communities. Dercy Teles reports: “With the cattle ranchers advancing on the reserve, community members end up giving in to cattle farming, because it is the only thing that provides them with a quick income.” (7) But she added: “I am not obliged to knock down the forest in my *colocação* to raise cattle. I can combine it with another activity. And that is what I do. I raise cattle. I am not a cattle rancher.” Numerous community members agreed that the meagre income provided by the sale of timber is leading to an expansion of cattle farming – an activity that logging is supposedly aimed at curbing.

Final considerations

In Acre, in 2010, more than 960,000 hectares of land were under sustainable management plans negotiated with the Environment Institute of Acre (IMAC) in public, private and community areas. Of this total area, 30,300 hectares were exploited that year, resulting in the extraction of 756,000 cubic metres of timber in the form of roundwood, primarily by companies and large landholders. This represented an increase of 79% over the previous year and a 150% increase in the volume of roundwood extracted annually compared to the previous decade, which demonstrates that logging in Acre is in full expansion.

Thus we can see that instead of the needed reduction in the consumption of tropical timber – one of the main direct causes of deforestation – a new market for “sustainable” timber has been created. Paradoxically, there is a shortage of timber in Acre.

Clearly, the extraction of “sustainable” and “certified” tropical timber is being carried out today so that a small few in the urban centres of Brazil and other countries, primarily the most industrialized countries of the global North, can have access to luxury products made from precious wood, at the expense of the vast majority of the people in the areas where the timber is extracted and their surroundings.

We conclude by reaffirming the need to respect, value and provide incentives for the way of life of rubber tapper communities. They have vast experience in their traditional livelihood practices, which do not destroy the forest and require very little expenditure, such as the extraction and gathering of latex, Brazil nuts and açaí. In the words of Dercy Teles: “Above all, we believe that in order to guarantee the preservation of nature, there is a need to value the products that have proven to be sustainable for centuries, as in the case of extractivism. Rubber tappers are extractors, they extract latex. For us, this means well-being, because one can live an extremely tranquil life in harmony with nature. It is very good to live in the forest.” And in the words of Chico Mendes: “We learned from the indigenous people and from the forest a way to raise our children. We satisfy all of our basic needs and we have created our own culture, one that brings us much closer to the indigenous tradition than to the tradition of the ‘civilized’ people. (...) Together (indigenous peoples, rubber tappers, riverine communities, etc.) we can protect nature.” (8)

Winnie Overbeek, winnie@wrm.org.uy, WRM

(1) Acre+20 – Uma Terra de Sonhos, um Mundo de Oportunidades, 2012.

(2) Paula, Elder Andrade de (2012), “A dupla face da destruição das florestas tropicais” (http://www.wrm.org.uy/oldsite/paises/Brasil/A_dupla_face_da_destruicao_das_florestas_tropicais.pdf).

(3) <http://br.fsc.org/newsroom.261.4.htm>

(4) Carvalho, Ricardo da Silveira: “Desenvolvimento, sustentabilidade e manejo madeireiro em comunidades no sudoeste da Amazônia: um olhar para além da engenharia florestal”. Master’s thesis, Universidad de Lavras, 2009.

(5) http://intranet.gvces.com.br/cms/arquivos/caminhos_para_a_mudanca.pdf

(6) http://cooperfloresta.com/home/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=63&Itemid=57

(7) <http://www.wrm.org.uy/oldsite/boletim/172/opiniao.html#7%20e>

(8) Revista Contracorrente, interview with Dercy Teles Cunha Carvalho, vice-president of the Rural Workers Union of Xapuri, Acre, “O extrativismo morreu”, 2013 (<http://issuu.com/guilhermeresende/docs/contracorrente5>).

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Dercy Teles on the popular movement of rubber tappers in Brazil

[From WRM bulletin 231, July 2017](#)

Dercy Teles, the first female president of a Brazilian Rural Workers' Union in Xapuri, Acre, shares her thoughts on the rich history of the rubber tappers' popular movement, including difficulties, lessons learned and challenges

Dercy Teles of Carvalho was the first female president of a Brazilian Rural Workers' Union, in the town of Xapuri, Acre in 1981. Xapuri became known nationally and internationally because of the union leader who succeeded Dercy: Chico Mendes. We spoke with Dercy at the recent gathering—"Effects of environmental and climate policies on traditional peoples: forest management, REDD, PES [Payment for Environmental Services]"—about the rich history of the rubber tappers' popular movement, including difficulties, lessons learned and challenges (1).

Dercy is the daughter of a traditional rubber tapping family. Her father, like most rubber tappers, came from Northeast Brazil in search of a better life. Dercy's father taught her how to read, and also how to do basic math exercises. Dercy began her activism during the military dictatorship, in the Grassroots Ecclesiastical Communities (CEBs, by their Portuguese acronym). Inspired by liberation theology, it was in the CEBs that she began to reflect on how to make a difference in the communities. She later became one of the popular education teachers that worked in the communities for free. Inspired by Paulo Freire's methods (2), they developed didactic materials specific to the reality of rubber tappers, using the language of the community. She says that this work was very fun, even though they sometimes had to walk 12 hours to get to the classrooms.

When cattle ranching began to appear in Acre state in the 1970s, the conflict arose between rubber tappers and large landowning ranchers. It was at this time that the rubber tapping community, which depended on the forest, began to successfully use the 'empate' tactic: a collective action involving a large delegation to raise awareness among the workers who drove the tractors that destroyed the forest.

In 1981, Dercy was elected president of the Rural Workers' Union by over 900 delegates. In those days, union leaders were not paid. Their comrades helped them with trips and meetings. At that time they also formed the Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores, PT in Portuguese), which has been in power in Acre for more than 20 years.

Question: What were the main lessons you learned from the rubber tappers' struggle?

Dercy: During the process of struggle which developed in Xapuri starting in the 1970s, we built many tools to strengthen the struggle; consequently Xapuri came

to be known nationally and internationally for its labor movement, with the participation of Chico Mendes, etc. We could see that the rural workers' union did not address the specific reality of rubber tapping communities. So we created specific organizations, such as the Amazonian Workers Center, which worked on issues of health and commerce. In 1985, at the University of Brasilia, we held the first national gathering of rubber tappers in Brazil, and with the help of several collaborators, we created the National Council of Rubber Tappers (CNS, by its Portuguese acronym). From that point on, we began to ideate the RESEX (Extractive Reserve), which was a kind of agrarian reform, but different, since it met the specific needs of people who extract/collect. The CNS elected a direction, and we began to think about action areas aimed to help people who extract live their way of life. But in the end, it failed, because we were not vigilant and did not control the process. We ended up giving everything away. We built a whole structure and handed it over to people outside the organizations and from the government—who used it in a way that was completely counter to what we had envisioned. The PT government co-opted everybody; and while it claims that everything is wonderful with “sustainable development,” it has become the rubber tappers' worst enemy. Today we see how the government's intervention has destroyed social movements. Even though teachers today receive a salary, with the PT, the liberating schools of before have become traditional schools—schools that prepare people for the city, not to remain in the forest. It is very challenging to mobilize people. Lack of credibility is significant. People only go to meetings if they get something material out of it. If the purpose of the meeting is to learn something, they don't go. Today, the leaders of the Rural Workers' Union of Xapuri receive a salary, which distances them from their bases. The Xapuri union's recent elections have made it so that the union now works for the timber companies. (3)

Therefore, what I have to say today—mainly to the youth, to the people who are building a movement to defend their rights and their territories—is that we must trust, but we must be vigilant. And when we choose a citizen to assume any position that represents the community, they must really represent what the community wants. They cannot speak for the community without having first had a discussion with the community; otherwise they are acting illegitimately and not representing the community's wishes. This is very important, because that is what made us lose a lot of what we had built—by putting people in charge who we trusted, but who actually did not act in accordance with that trust.

Question: What does an extractive reserve (RESEX) mean for you all—not as it ended up becoming, but in the way you imagined it? What was most important about that idea?

Dercy: The main idea behind the extractive reserve was to institutionalize a model of agrarian reform that would meet the specific needs of the culture and traditional population. It wasn't meant to be a parcelation, since parceling land does not meet the specific needs of the culture and traditional population. Hence, the reserve was designed in that way, to promote an agrarian reform appropriate to the reality

of the rubber tapping population, at a time in which this activity was still quite significant.

Question: What was the vision about decision-making—about what to do within the extractive reserve, and about who would make those decisions?

Dercy: A key point of the original extractive reserve project was that the inhabitants themselves would manage it. This was so important that we developed a land use plan with the participation of inhabitants, wherein they determined—point by point—what could and could not happen within the reserve. And they would be main people responsible.

Question: And what has the extractive reserve become today?

Dercy: Look, with the intervention of the government, of outsiders to the reserve, and of external agents operating within the reserve, the whole project became distorted. Cabinets in Brasilia [the capital of Brazil] gradually modified the land use plan for the reserve, with the participation of people claiming to represent the community. But really they do not represent anything, because today they are government officials, serving the government and not the community. Therefore the whole land use plan collapsed, and today it serves the interests of the government and not the workers. And living in the reserve has now become a miserable situation: people are constantly terrified and criminalized, they must pay exorbitant fees to maintain their subsistence gardens, and they receive only 100 reales per month [around USD 30 dollars] from the “forest market” (4). And there is no one to turn to for help, since the Chico Mendes Institute—which manages the reserve—only enters the reserve to punish, fine, criminalize and threaten people. There is no educational process to help people live in harmony with nature. The government does not create the conditions for people to be able to live from extractivism without harming nature; even though it has been proven that one of the activities that is harmonious with nature is the extraction of rubber and Brazil nuts. Yet Brazil nuts do not even figure into land use plans, and rubber extraction is bankrupt, because there is no market to absorb it. All of this leads to a process of soft expulsion: people are spontaneously leaving.

Question: In addition to what you have already said, what else would you say to other struggles, and to young activists who are inspired by this struggle in Xapuri. How can we rescue what was lost?

Dercy: It is always necessary to be the yeast in the dough. Regarding lessons learned, I would transmit the following message to young people: we have to learn by doing and do by learning, because only then do we value our environment, culture and territory. The purpose of this meeting here is to unite indigenous and non-indigenous people living in the forest. Without the forest, we cannot live. The only thing left in the city is drug trafficking. We shall forget our differences, and we

shall do so not for ourselves. Forty years of struggle have passed, and today I have the pleasure of encouraging others to fight. Our main enemy is capitalism; and we are not fighting it because we are not united.

1. See several interviews conducted at this gathering, including one with Dercy Teles (in Portuguese: http://encontrodexapuri.blogspot.nl/2017/06/blog-post_7.html)
2. Brazilian educator, famous for his contribution to the field of popular education.
3. See the article about how communities within the Chico Mendes RESEX in Xapuri denounce so-called “community-based forest management” at <http://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/section1/brazil-voices-of-local-communities-in-acre-denounce-violations-in-community-based-sustainable-forest-management/>
4. A payment of 100 reales per month [about USD30 dollars] which the State gives to forest-dwelling families, on the condition that they do not touch the forest; for example, that they not set fires to prepare for crops.

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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 Valparaiso / 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 exercito 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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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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REDD: A scheme rotten at the core

[From WRM Bulletin 245, September 2019](#)

REDD+ has shown to be a big failure for the climate, the forests and forest peoples, but many international agencies and governments continue to support it. This article takes a look at its continued inability to halt deforestation and the fundamental flaws of the main international REDD+ initiatives.

It has become difficult to get a clear idea of what is really happening with REDD+, the biggest international policy on forests. It has already shown to be a big failure for the climate, the forests and forest peoples (1), but many international funding agencies and governments continue to support and promote REDD+. The next round of the UN climate negotiations in November 2019 will discuss REDD+ yet again. This article takes a look at the continued failure of REDD+ to halt deforestation and fundamental flaws of the main international REDD+ initiatives.

The World Bank and REDD+: Facilitating more Deforestation

Let's first take a look at the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), which was launched in December 2007 as a pilot initiative to help "jump-start" the carbon market for REDD+. (2)

Nearly twelve years after its launch, a perhaps predictable pattern soon became apparent: Big announcements on demanding social and environmental 'safeguards,' 'benefit sharing plans' or 'participatory' processes were sooner or later followed by a weakening of these very rules and promises. Yet, those announcements enabled the Facility to present itself as a 'trend-setter' and satisfy donor requests while ensuring that enough REDD+ country programmes moved ahead – even if they had not met the requirements for such a progression. (3) The result: 19 countries have been admitted into the Carbon Fund – the Facility's final phase which enables participating countries to receive payments based on 'results' of avoiding deforestation. What this means, in a nutshell, is that under 'results-based' payments, the government receiving the money can count the allegedly avoided emission in its own country's national carbon accounting system. If the payment had been for REDD+ credits that the Carbon Fund can sell or that members of the Carbon Fund can use to claim that their emissions are not damaging the climate, the government receiving the money would not be able to claim the reduced emissions from REDD+ in its own national carbon accounting system – because the Carbon Fund would already be claiming the reductions.

Before payments can be made, the World Bank needs to sign a contract with the country participant from the global South. So far, the World Bank has signed three: with the governments of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mozambique and Ghana. Under these contracts (called 'Emission Reduction Purchase Agreement' – ERPA), the World Bank will pay US 5 dollars for every tonne of carbon dioxide a government can show to have avoided through keeping

deforestation in the country below an agreed limit.

But that scenario may be about to change...

With the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility due to close in December 2025, and because the purchase agreements are supposed to cover at least five years, all contracts need to be finalized by the end of December 2019. (4) Whether this will be possible without another round of weakening rules and donors turning a blind eye to shortcuts taken in order to meet the deadline, remains to be seen.

Furthermore, the FCPF's Carbon Fund has already submitted an application to be recognized as a registered trader of REDD credits –i.e. carbon offsets that can be sold and bought- to the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA). (5) CORSIA will allow airlines to increase the number of international flights while claiming that this does not damage the climate because the carbon credits they purchase will compensate for a portion of their projected emissions.

If the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility is accepted as a supplier of carbon credits to international airlines through CORSIA, the World Bank's Facility is no longer just a 'results-based' REDD+ payment mechanism – it will be a REDD+ carbon credit trading mechanism. Because when airlines buy a REDD+ credit, they buy the right to claim that a portion of the emissions from their flights has been compensated. Much more stringent monitoring and use restrictions imposed on peasant farming communities are likely to be the consequence.

Existing drafts point to a repeat of the established pattern whereby REDD+ initiatives blame deforestation on peasant farming and restrict shifting cultivation and other traditional forest use practises – while large-scale destruction driven by corporations continues unabated. In this case, the consequences for forest peoples and peasant farmers will be no different than they are under private sector REDD+ projects – just on a bigger scale (see also WRM Bulletin 231). These REDD+ projects have above all brought conflicts, contradictions and lies to communities living in and with the forest. (6)

What about other major REDD+ pilot initiatives?

Besides the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, the Amazon Fund, REDD Early Movers and the Green Climate Fund's REDD+ pilot programme are among the most prominent initiatives that have set out to promote REDD+, either as a carbon trading or as a 'results-based' payment mechanism (although the only real difference between the two is how the REDD+ unit is used). Have these other initiatives fared any better in terms of tackling deforestation or supporting forest peoples' stewardship of forests?

The governments of Norway and Germany have been committed to pay over one billion dollars into the Amazon Fund, managed by the Brazilian National Development Bank (BNDES). Norway is by far the largest contributor, with its commitment to pay over one billion dollars into the Amazon Fund if deforestation

in the Brazilian Amazon stays below agreed levels. In August 2019, Norway announced that it would be suspending additional payments to the Amazon Fund due to disputes with Brazil's far-right government of Jair Bolsonaro over how the money already committed to the Fund can be spent. Additional payments would have been unlikely anyways since payments are made only after 'results' can be shown that Amazon deforestation is kept below an agreed limit. Under the current government of the extreme right however, the deforestation rate is likely to increase well above the limit. And failure to produce results means: no payments.

The government of Germany runs another 'results-based' REDD+ payment programme in Brazil, with the state governments of Acre and Mato Grosso. (7) The REDD Early Movers programme is already in its second phase in Acre, where the government received US 25 million dollars between 2012 and 2017 as 'results-based' payments. 'Results' during phase I were easy to obtain for the Acre government, because the limit or reference level had been calculated on the basis of a ten-year average that included the peak deforestation years in the early 2000s. No action was needed to reduce deforestation. In fact, deforestation could still increase significantly and the government of Acre was still eligible for 'results-based' payments. The reference level has been lowered for phase II. With a 300 per cent increase in deforestation across the state of Acre in comparison to the previous year, the 2018 /2019 performance in Acre is also likely to be: no payments. And as a result, also no funding for government initiatives and programmes that have become entirely dependent on REDD+ payments.

In Mato Grosso, the programme provides payments if (emissions from) deforestation stay below an agreed limit that is the average deforestation in the years 2004-2015. This limit is also very lax because it includes the peak deforestation years. Little is known about how much REDD Early Movers money the German government has disbursed there to date. What is known, however, is that the government of Mato Grosso used part of the money to purchase satellite images from a private company even though the Brazilian National Institute for Space Research, INPE, is running a widely-recognized satellite-based deforestation monitoring programme called PRODES. The purchase of private satellite images is even more problematic considering current politics in Brazil. In reaction to the news about the massive increase in deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon since his government took over, far-right president Bolsonaro has been questioning the INPE figures and proposed to replace the bearer of the bad news with the very private service from which the government of Mato Grosso – with German government funds – is buying satellite images.

The Green Climate Fund's US 500 million dollars 'results-based' REDD+ payment pilot programme is currently undergoing an evaluation. It has so far approved two funding requests for supposedly 'results-based' REDD+ payments. Both requests were submitted by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) – one on behalf of the government of Brazil and one on behalf of the government of Ecuador. The Brazilian request for US 96.5 million dollars was approved in February 2019, amidst much criticism and just a month after the Bolsonaro government had taken power. Key requirements for approval of the Brazilian government's

payment request, such as participation of civil society in the body to decide how funds would be used or a commitment to continue implementation of measures to tackle deforestation, seem to no longer be met, and funds may in the end not be (fully) disbursed. The request from the government of Ecuador was approved in July 2019, with the Green Climate Fund Board accepting forest carbon data with an average of more than 30 per cent uncertainty. Much of the payment to the government of Ecuador may thus be for ‘results’ based on data uncertainties rather than actual emissions prevented from release into the atmosphere.

Finally, in September 2019, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) approved its Tropical Forest Standard. Initially, the Air Resources Board had set out to adopt a decision that would allow international REDD+ credits to be used by companies in California who are part of the state’s emissions trading scheme. When opposition turned out to be harder to overcome than perhaps anticipated, the Air Resources Board introduced another loop to keep the discussion going: Instead of a decision to approve or reject use of international REDD+ credits in the California carbon trading system, it presented a draft ‘Tropical Forest Standard’. The Air Resources Board is keen to underline that “The TFS [Tropical Forest Standard] is not proposing, nor would it result in any new offset credits being eligible for use in the California Cap-and-Trade Program ... and any such future connection would require a future rulemaking proceeding and a separate Board vote.” (8) That, however, raises the question of why a California state institution would spend so much energy and resources into designing a standard it does then not intend to use? (9)

Of course all these confusing details about a REDD+ credits versus a ‘results-based’ payments and who can count how many emission reductions are a smokescreen that hides at least three reasons for why the REDD+ experiment must be ended urgently:

(1) 12 years of REDD+ have been unable to halt or even significantly reduce deforestation.

(2) REDD+ has been effective as a distraction that turns attention away from the real causes of deforestation and climate change.

(3) REDD+ projects and programmes have led to more forests and territories of forest-dependant communities being subjected to control and monitoring of a community’s land use by outsiders. As offsets, they have also allowed polluting industries to continue or even expand the corporate operations that ruin forests and the climate.

REDD+ as a success? If you ask fossil fuel companies...

The REDD+ public relations (PR) machine has been in overdrive ever since the scheme was given international visibility through its adoption into the UN climate negotiations. Each delay and failure to demonstrate progress was PR-ed away – not enough time, the circumstances aren’t right, too many critics, too little research, too little money, etc.

For all these excuses, a credible example or two can probably be found.

But technical points to ‘improve’ REDD+ miss the reality that REDD+ is rotten at the core: REDD+ was set up as a carbon trading mechanism, and renaming it ‘results-based’ payment, jurisdictional REDD+ or calling it any other name has not improved its underlying assumptions.

No amount of public relations spin will change that. It explains why Norway’s and Germany’s REDD+ pilot ‘performance-based’ programmes in Brazil are no longer making payments: once the fake ‘results’ manufactured by inflating the limits were gone and genuine action to tackle large-scale corporate deforestation would have been needed to produce ‘results’, the ‘results’ vanished.

At the same time, international media attention has turned to the Amazon where the month of August saw fires burning on a much larger scale than in recent years, releasing massive amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Meanwhile, the 96.5 million dollars that the Brazilian government was awarded for ‘results-based’ REDD+ payment from the Green Climate Fund in February 2019 is less than 1/300th of the 31.9 billion dollars that governments and banks in Brazil spent on supporting the soy and cattle industry in 2017 alone. That was before the government of Bolsonaro assumed power.

No matter how well-oiled the REDD+ public relations machine may be: Nature will not be fooled. Faith that REDD+ ‘problems’ can be fixed has shown to be misplaced by evidence accumulated over the past 12 years. REDD+ proponents must cut their losses and put an end to all REDD+-type schemes, the international forest policy debacle that has stalled meaningful action on tackling deforestation and supporting communities that live in and with the forest.

Jutta Kill, jutta@wrm.org.uy

Member of the WRM international secretariat

(1) WRM (2014): REDD. A Collection of Conflicts, Contradictions and Lies.

(2) WRM Bulletin 111, “The World Bank: A major broker of carbon purchases”, October 2006

(3) An open letter by the Rainforest Foundation UK and others provides several examples of this pattern of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility making big announcements, only to weaken the rules and requirements at a later stage.

(4) Documents and Decisions from the 20th meeting of the World Bank Forest Carbon Partnership Facility Carbon Fund meeting on 8-11 June 2019 in Washington, DC

(5) The Forest Carbon Partnership Facility application to CORSIA

For more information on how international aviation is damaging the climate and why its CORSIA plan will fuel, not prevent climate chaos, see the REDD-Monitor post ‘Nature cannot be fooled’

(6) WRM (2014): REDD. A Collection of Conflicts, Contradictions and Lies.

(7) Germany has also signed REDD Early Movers contracts with the governments of Colombia and Ecuador.

(8) California Air Resources Board Responses to Comments on the Draft Environmental Analysis Prepared for the Endorsement of the California Tropical Forestry Standard. November 9, 2018, 2-26.

(9) Larry Lohmann, Carbon Confidential. A California Crime Paper. The Corner House, 2019

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3. Resistance against the proposals to allow international forest offsets, 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.

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.

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Brazil: Sena Madureira Declaration, June 17, 2018

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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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 fulfills 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@Z!; 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 Panamazônicos; 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.

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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

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 (available in English, Spanish and Portuguese)

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 | Bulletin 204, August 2014.

“Sustainable Forest Landscapes”: A new frontier for the commodification of nature | Bulletin 198, February 2014.

From REDD+ Projects to ‘Jurisdictional REDD+’: More Bad News for the Climate and Communities | Bulletin 231, July 2017.

REDD Alert! How REDD+ Projects Undermine Peasant Farming and Real Solutions to Climate Change | Bulletin 219, November 2015.

The Conservation Industry: A For-Profit Sector? | Bulletin 242, March 2019.

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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