



3.3 Strengthening Indigenous and Tribal Peoples' Rights to Management of Their Territories

1. Background information

Indigenous Peoples' land cover at a quarter of terrestrial earth and 40% of landscapes without industrial level human impacts (Garner et al 2018). A major share of the world's forests is found in these areas. For example, in Latin America there are 330-380 million hectares of forest in indigenous and tribal peoples' territories.

Traditionally, thanks to cultural, institutional, legal, economic, and demographic factors, tropical forests in indigenous and tribal territories in Latin America, Asia, and Africa have been much better protected than most other forests. However, these forests are increasingly threatened by outside encroachment, fires and drought, and the erosion of cultural norms and traditional knowledge. Urgent action is needed to avoid devastating consequences; not only for the territories' 200 million inhabitants but for the climate and wild species needed to sustain regional food systems.

If much of the forests these groups occupy are lost or degraded over the next few decades, local extreme temperatures will rise, putting crops and human health at risk. Rainfall will become less predictable and – in some places – scarcer. Medicinal plants, wild crop relatives, and pollinators and seed dispersers will be lost. Wildfires will damage agricultural investments and threaten humid health. Livestock and people will face increasing epidemics of zoonotic disease, both new and long-standing.

2. Summary of each proposed solution

2.1 What, in brief, is the solution?

To strengthen the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples' capacity to manage and protect their forests require: 1) greater formal and informal recognition of their communal rights over their lands and forests and efforts to ensure these rights are respected and protected; 2) regulatory frameworks, government procurement policies, and technical and financial support for sustainable forest management and agroforestry and food systems, aligned with indigenous customary norms and traditions. 3) payments for environmental services designed to bolster communal capacity and incentives to manage forests; 4) cultural revitalization and strengthening of traditional knowledge on forest and land management; and 5) fostering a new generation of indigenous and tribal organizations, with strong participation of women and youth, which can meet the evolving challenges these communities face. These five elements are synergistic and should be treated as a package.

2.2 What was/were the source(s) from which this solution emerged?

This solution is based on several reports such as the Global Assessment Reports of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), IPCC special report on land and CLIMATE, and the comprehensive report based on 300+ relatively recent studies, to be published in March by FAO and FILAC, among others. These studies provide clear compelling evidence about the magnitude and causes of the problem and the policies with proven track records to address it. The evidence base for these solutions is stronger than for most other forest policies analysed in the literature.



2.3 What problem is it trying to address within food systems?

At the local level, this will help to address food security for millions of the world's inhabitants who are most vulnerable to hunger and malnutrition, by ensuring their access to forest foods, and providing them with additional sources of cash income.

At the sub-national level (and in some cases beyond) it can provide climatic benefits and environmental services related to biodiversity that can help to sustain crops, provide forage for livestock, ensure riverine fish yields, sustain water aquifers, and reduce the expansion of vector borne diseases.

2.4 Why is addressing that problem important for achieving the goal of your ACAI?

At the global level, it can meaningfully contribute to increasing carbon capture, reducing carbon emissions, conserving genetic resources with multiple applied uses, and avoiding new pandemics of zoonotic diseases. At least 17% of total carbon stored in forests globally is in lands managed collectively by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (WHRC/RRI 2018). WRI has estimated the Net Present Value of the lower carbon emissions in the titled Indigenous territories of Brazil, Colombia, and Bolivia at between 43 and 60 billion US dollars. There are more vertebrate species in the indigenous territories of Brazil than in all of that country's non-indigenous protected areas.

2.5 How can this solution address that problem?

Rigorous peer reviewed studies demonstrate that:

- Land titling and other steps to strengthen collective land tenure increase Indigenous Peoples' abilities to avoid external encroachment linked to forest destruction. Formal tenure facilitates access to government environmental incentives. Community efforts to achieve secure tenure sometimes increase their social capital and capacity for collective action. Indigenous and non-indigenous governance mechanisms can complement and serve as checks and balances for each other.
- Community forestry and agroforestry and communal payments for environmental services create incentives to maintain standing forests and can fund organizational efforts that reinforce the communities' cohesion, technical and administrative capacity to manage forests, and ability to negotiate with external actors.

There is also evidence that:

- Cultural revitalization and traditional knowledge provide useful practical knowledge for forest management, strengthens their collective identity and self-esteem and reinforces their values of reciprocity, sustainability and living in harmony with nature, among others.
- Successful indigenous and tribal governance must be accountable to diverse external and internal stakeholders, with often contradictory demands (e.g., government agencies, funders, community members), and must engage at multiple geographical scales. Meaningful participation of women and youth is essential to take full advantage of the territories' human resources, achieve social cohesion, and sustain efforts to further develop and transmit indigenous knowledge over generations.



2.6 Why does this solution align to the definition and criteria for a ‘game changing solution’ developed by the Summit?

The 2019 IPBES Global Assessment Report found that 290 million hectares of natural forest cover was lost between 1990 and 2015, but that the loss was less severe or avoided in areas held or managed by indigenous peoples and local communities. However, the Business as Usual (BAU) trend, is for those rates to converge, leading to much higher overall forest loss. To avoid that, an unprecedented, concerted effort is needed to avoid that “game changing trend” (towards destruction). Fortunately, all of the components required for changing the game in a positive direction have now been amply studied and validated, and are being championed by the Indigenous and tribal peoples themselves.

- All the proposed solutions are based on indigenous peoples’ proposals to the FAO, IFAD, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UNFCCC and other multilateral bodies. There are also existing constitutions and laws recognising indigenous peoples’ rights and indigenous-sensitive policies and programmes within several regions. Most of Latin America’s political constitutions recognise the indigenous peoples’ rights and the pluri-national and multi-cultural character of these countries. A few countries in Asia, Africa, North America and Europe also have laws recognising indigenous rights. Latin America has advanced farther than in other regions in titling of Indigenous and tribal lands, community forestry, and payment for environmental services. The existing programmes could be greatly expanded, and new ones created for a relatively modest cost (often less than \$50 / hectare.) A new International Land and Forest Tenure Facility has been established to promote the implementation of existing policies favouring indigenous peoples and local communities’ rights over land and forests.
- It should be feasible to strengthen the governance and forest condition of over hundreds of million hectares of forest. That would be sufficient to significantly influence regional and global outcomes, as well as local ones. To the extent that these efforts generate economically and culturally viable institutions, enterprises, knowledge, and expectations, they should be sustainable.

2.7 What is the existing evidence supporting the argument that this solution will work, or at least that it will achieve the initial outcomes described above?

There are numerous rigorous peer-reviewed studies that document the environmental and social benefits of titling of indigenous and tribal territories, community forest management, and payment for environmental services in Latin America, Asia and Africa, based on existing or recent policies and programmes.

2.8 What is the current and/or likely political support for this idea?

Powerful political interests oppose this solution, largely because they seek to use the indigenous and tribal peoples’ forestlands for alternative uses, such as cattle ranching, mechanised cereal production, palm oil plantations, mining, illicit crops, land speculations, and others. These groups tend to be especially powerful in the regions close to the forested territories themselves.

Nonetheless, in some countries public opinion is supportive of indigenous and tribal forest rights and management; and public awareness could increase that sentiment. There is growing consensus among



inter-governmental and bilateral environmental funding and technical cooperation agencies about the importance of strengthening indigenous peoples and local communities' rights and management of forest lands. Faith leaders, environmentalists, youth activists, and cultural figures have increasingly taken up the issue in some countries. In some of the smaller forested Latin American countries, the indigenous and tribal populations in forested areas are themselves important voting constituencies. If non-indigenous farmers understood better the benefits of indigenous managed forests for their crops, they might be more supportive.

2.9 Are there certain contexts for which this solution is particularly well suited, or, conversely, contexts for which it is not well-suited at all?

The Amazon Basin, Mesoamerica, Chiquitania, Cerrado, and Gran Chaco, the Congo basin, Southeast Asia are some areas where these solutions are especially relevant.

2.10 Who are the key stakeholders to be further involved in the process of developing and refining the solution idea?

Indigenous and tribal peoples, faith leaders, government agencies and inter-governmental agencies concerned with indigenous peoples, forests, land administration, environment, bi-lingual and intercultural education, culture, forestry and mining companies, environmental, human rights, and enterprise development NGOs, and academics concerned with these issues.