

CLIMATE SOLUTION:

Titling Indigenous Peoples Lands: Conservation and Sustainable Use



AREAS OF INTACT FOREST STRONGLY OVERLAP WITH THE territories of indigenous peoples territories in many parts of Central America. Strengthening indigenous management may therefore be the best strategy to ensure a long-term conservation of those natural resources. Forests of the World and MOPAWI are working with two indigenous peoples in Honduras, the Miskitu and Tolupan peoples, to conserve forest ecosystems through a combined focus on land rights, institutional strengthening and sustainable management of natural resources.

Land Rights is a key issue, as the indigenous peoples are under a constant pressure from illegal settlers, private landowners and extractive industries that seek to invade their territories and exploit their resources. The authorities are neglecting to intervene, and sometimes even support the claims of the land invaders. For this reason it's important to strengthen the indigenous peoples by granting titles to their territories, settle existing conflicts within the territories, and recognize their right to self-determination and self-governance.

Institutional strengthening is important, as strong and well-functioning organizations are key to ensure long-term stability, democracy and continuous progress. For this reason the

Type of action

- Rights-based conservation of land through secure resource tenure
- Community forest management and monitoring
- Agroforestry
- Reforestation
- Adaptive and resilient food system changes

Location

In two regions of Honduras:

1. In two Miskitu territories in the department Gracias a Dios in La Mosquitia
2. In three Tolupan territories in the department of Yoro

Groups and organizations involved

- Forests of the World
- MOPAWI: Mosquitia Pawisa (La Mosquitia Development Agency)
- MASTA: Mosquitia Asla Takanka (Unity of the Mosquitia)—Represents the Miskitu peoples
- FETRIXY: La federación de Tribus Xicaques de Yoro (Federation of the Indigenous Xicaque Tribes of Yoro)—Represents the Tolupan/Xicaque peoples

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strengthening of the indigenous peoples organizations is important as it enables them to fulfil their strategic mission and to extend the capacities and resources received to other beneficiaries.

Sustainable management of natural resources serves a multitude of social as well as environmental and economic purposes. Establishing agroforestry systems serves as important strategies for rural families to adapt to climate changes as it improves crop yields, diversifies income, improves food security, provides a local income and serves as a social safety net. The reintroduction of native crops and new pest resistant variants improves food security. The reforestation of water catchment areas is fundamental for the livelihood of many rural families. Establishment of areas managed sustainably for timber, commercialization of non-timber forest products, and overall improvements into the management of existing natural forests and community woodlots ensures a stable income for the territories that also serves to strengthen local organisations. Finally, community based forest monitoring using open source satellite images and GIS-software enables the indigenous peoples to combat forest fires and pest outbreaks as well as to curtail illegal logging and poaching in their territories.

Impacts of this action on...

Climate resilience (adaptation)

Establishment of agroforestry systems, the introduction of native crops and resilient varieties as well as the reforestation of water catchment areas are important climate change adaptation strategies for rural families.

Carbon emissions (mitigation)

Some of the biggest drivers of deforestation in miskitu and toluan territories are currently illegal logging, illegal settlers, bark beetle outbreaks and forest fires. Empowering the indigenous peoples to legally defend their forests and to efficiently monitor and combat deforestation, pest outbreaks and forest fires is a good strategy to curtail deforestation and thus reduce carbon emissions.

Social and economic factors

The capacity building of rural families and the institutional strengthening of representative authorities and local organizations provide important pathways to improve the livelihoods of rural families and ensure the rights of the indigenous peoples. The introduction of cash crops and timber trees as well as the organization of the commercialization of forest and agroforestry products generates local income and ensures fairer pricing of local products. Capacity building in sustainable forest management enables the indigenous peoples to protect their own forest resources from pests and fires and generates local jobs that would normally be undertaken by outside contractors.

Carbon capture (mitigation)

Reforestation of deforested and degraded lands, particularly in strategically important areas, such as water catchment areas and biodiversity-rich areas increases carbon capture. The conversion of agricultural lands to agroforestry systems also increases carbon uptake through the introduction of trees into food-producing landscapes.

Biodiversity and ecosystem resilience

The two major negative impacts on biodiversity are the loss of habitat and the excessive hunting of vulnerable species. Increasing awareness of the importance of biodiversity, creating awareness of the state of current animal populations in the territories and curtailing poaching will therefore have a positive impact on biodiversity as it reduces pressure on vulnerable species.





This action is transformational because...

It empowers the indigenous peoples themselves to continue defending the intact forest resources they've been defending through generations, but now using legal means and monitoring approaches (eg., remote sensing). The sustainable management of the natural resources and the reforestation of degraded lands enables the rural families to better adapt to climate changes while at the same time providing an important incentive to keep on defending and protecting the forest resources.

This action could be scaled up through...

Government support for land titling processes of indigenous peoples lands, resolution of existing land disputes, and the recognition of the right of the indigenous peoples to self-determination and to self-govern their territories. Continuous research into new resilient crop varieties is another important focus, as pest outbreaks can seriously jeopardize the livelihood of rural families. Additional funding is also needed, in order to reach as many communities as possible.

The CLARA network includes climate justice advocates, faith groups, conservation groups, land-rights campaigners, agroecologists, and representative of peoples movements around the globe. Our commitment to social justice brought us into the climate debate and informs our approaches to climate solutions. For more information about CLARA, visit climatelandambitionrightsalliance.org.

CLARA
Climate Land Ambition and Rights Alliance

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