

Fact sheet:

Climate action solutions: opportunities through rights-based forestry and territorial management

An analysis of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of Mesoamerican countries

- This report reviews the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of Mesoamerican countries with large forest areas. NDCs articulate the actions countries will take to implement the Paris climate agreement. Revised NDCs are due by 2020, making this an opportune moment to review commitments and make recommendations.
- Although emissions from the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sector account for more than a third of emissions in the Mesoamerican region – and in some countries account for the majority of emissions – country NDCs disproportionately emphasize investments in the energy sector.
- NDCs do not propose significant new measures to conserve and manage existing natural forests. The main focus in the forest sector is on large-scale reforestation and restoration, but little to no detail is provided regarding how and where such investments might be channeled.
- The territories of indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) receive limited attention in country NDCs, despite the fact that their lands contain the major remaining forests in the region, cover areas under heavy threat of deforestation and increased CO₂ emissions, and are home to peoples with high vulnerability to climate change.
- Insufficient attention to these territories and the threats they face is problematic: our conservative calculations find that indigenous and community **territories contain over 20 times the CO₂ equivalent included in the most ambitious emissions reduction targets. Even a relatively low rate of deforestation (1.87% over the next decade, which is less than half the average rate during 2001-2018) would surpass the most ambitious NDC actions** in other sectors.
- Mesoamerica is important globally as an example of what IPLC rights over forests can achieve, when given sufficient support. Community forest landscapes across the region have received attention as global models, demonstrating how investment in rights-based IPLC natural resource management and enterprise can achieve low-emissions development. They are the solutions in plain sight to the climate crisis, yet they are almost completely invisible in country NDCs.
- Investment in IPLC rights and territorial management cost less than large-scale renewable energy projects (hydropower, solar and wind), and are less likely to cause new land and social conflicts. They are proven strategies that have worked for generations to conserve carbon, and provide crucial social, biodiversity and environmental benefits.
- NDCs currently provide little detail about how commitments will be met. Revised NDCs need to provide more detail and map actions to specific national programs and policies for greater transparency. Specifically, country NDCs need to better articulate the actions prioritized in their respective REDD+ strategies, which consistently emphasize the central role of IPLC rights and territories in the fight against climate change. The recent IPCC report on land underscores the urgent attention this issue must receive if climate actions are to succeed.
- NDCs generally do not mention safeguards, and in most cases little consultation was undertaken in their development. Development of revised NDCs need to specify the safeguards to be deployed in all major investments, and should include plans for consultation of NDC performance to date, as well as the definition of new targets and strategies.