

WORKSHOP REPORT

VI Workshop on REDD for Panamanian Indigenous Leaders: Safeguards and International Climate Change Negotiations

**Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute
Panama City, Panama
August 12-13, 2010**

A workshop jointly organized by:

McGill University
Environmental Leadership & Training Initiative (ELTI)
National Coordinating Body of Indigenous Peoples (COONAPIP)
Panama's Embera-Wounaan Youth Organization (OJEWP)

Workshop sponsors:

Arcadia Fund
Blue Moon Fund

Background: Since January 2009, ELTI has co-organized a series of seminars on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) for Panama's indigenous authorities and their technical teams. REDD is a proposed mechanism that aims to mitigate the impacts of global warming caused by carbon dioxide emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, by financially compensating those who conserve or sustainably manage these ecosystems on lands that are under threat of conversion to another use. As stewards of more than 40% of the country's remaining forests, and as the groups to be most likely impacted by climate change, Panama's indigenous peoples are a key stakeholder in REDD discussions and the implementation of any future mechanism, whether under regulated or voluntary schemes. ELTI has been involved in three of the six REDD workshops for indigenous leaders held in collaboration with McGill University, the National Coordinating Body of Indigenous Peoples (COONAPIP), Panama's Embera-Wounaan Youth Organizations (OJEWP) and the Dobbo Yala Foundation.

Concerns about the potential impacts of REDD on the rights, culture and livelihoods of indigenous and traditional peoples have been escalating worldwide. Panama is no exception. The country was selected in 2008 and 2009 as a pilot for REDD implementation preparatory actions (i.e. REDD Readiness) under the United Nations Collaborative Programme on REDD in Developing Countries (UN-REDD) and the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) of the World Bank (WB), respectively. Both initiatives have been the target of heavy scrutiny and criticism from civil society and indigenous peoples' organizations due to fears over greater government intervention and





control over lucrative forest resources, displacement of communities from non-legally recognized customary lands, infringement and violations to territorial rights, unequal distribution of potential REDD benefits, and high opportunity costs associated to REDD transactions, among other real and perceived risks.

This VI workshop on REDD was developed to provide Panama's indigenous authorities' and their technical teams with key information and an update on discussions regarding REDD safeguards, a series of "social protections" that if adopted – and most importantly, if implemented adequately – will reduce and in some cases, eliminate the aforementioned threats to their interests. The workshop also served as a forum for the indigenous leaders to better understand the dynamics and structure of international climate negotiations. They took part in a simulation exercise of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations, in which the indigenous leaders played the role of the "Indigenous Caucus" representing the interests of indigenous peoples around the world, while graduate students from a joint STRI/McGill summer course represented signatory countries to the convention and members of the Climate Action Network. The group negotiated the actual text on REDD that will be considered for adoption at the next Conference of Parties (COP-16) in Cancun in December, 2010.

Workshop Objectives:

- Review and encourage discussions on the concept and current state of REDD, with an emphasis on social safeguards.
- Provide participants with training on the structure, content and dynamics of international climate change negotiations.
- Conduct a simulation exercise of international climate change negotiations, with an emphasis on REDD, aimed at giving participants an opportunity to experience first-hand the complexity and pace of negotiations and consider mechanisms to inform discussions and access key information.

Workshop format: The workshop took place over a two-day period at STRI's headquarters in Panama City. During the first day, participants took part in a training and discussion on REDD social safeguards. This was followed by a brief training on the structure and role of the "Indigenous Caucus" in international climate change negotiations, and a facilitated simulation during which the indigenous authorities and their technical teams assigned and began to prepare for their participation in the negotiations scheduled for the following day. The co-Presidents, Secretary, Press Liaison, as well as thematic representatives and those who would engage with other civil society groups (e.g. Climate Action Network) and representatives from the G77+China, Coalition of Rainforest Nations and Umbrella Group, among others, were selected among the group to establish the caucus. The simulation of the negotiation on REDD took place the second day of the workshop and followed the exact same structure, agenda and schedule of COP negotiations.

Coordinators and Course Instructors: The event was designed and organized by Dr. Catherine Potvin (McGill), Mr. Javier Mateo-Vega (ELTI) and Dr. Eva Garen (ELTI), with the backing of COONAPIP and support of OJEW. The first

day of the event was facilitated by Javier and two instructors, Mr. Onel Masardule (Foundation for the Promotion of Indigenous Knowledge - FPCI) and Mr. Estabancio Castro (International Alliance of Indigenous-Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests). The simulation of the negotiation on the second day was facilitated by Catherine and Dr. Philippe Le Prestre (Laval University).

Participants: The workshop was attended by 28 indigenous authorities and their technical teams from five of the seven ethnic groups of Panama, namely Bribri, Naso, Kuna, Emberá and Wounaan, and representatives from indigenous NGOs and youth/student groups. In addition, graduate students from the joint McGill/STRI summer course participated in the simulation negotiation in their role as representatives of signatory countries to the convention and as members of the Climate Action Network (CAN).

Outcome & Course Follow-up: Through this workshop, Panama's indigenous leaders not only continued to enhance their understanding of REDD and relevant social safeguards, but also gained greater insight on how international climate change negotiations take place and how they may participate more actively in informing and accessing key information on ongoing REDD discussions. This workshop followed the most recent general congress held by COONAPIP (Comarca Embera-Wounaan, July 30-31, 2010) in which the heads of all 11 indigenous congresses of Panama signed a formal resolution stating that they have not approved the implementation of REDD in their territories, but have established a mechanism to begin drafting the position of the country's indigenous communities with regards to REDD. In this resolution, they also state that they are unwilling to negotiate or cede their rights in any climate change related program or project and will stand firm against any attempt to do so. REDD safeguards are now at the heart of discussions regarding the future position that Panama's indigenous peoples will take on REDD. ELTI is considering collaborating with McGill, FPCI and the Rainforest Foundation is hosting additional trainings on REDD and related topics in coming months if deemed necessary and requested by COONAPIP.



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