



CLIMATE AND LAND USE ALLIANCE 2024-2030

Mexico & Central America Initiative



GOAL

We support efforts to reverse deforestation, build climate resilience, and strengthen Indigenous Peoples', Afro-Descendant Peoples' and local communities' rights through transforming territorial to regional governance across Mexico and Central America.

WHY

Mexico & Central America?

The forests of Mexico and Central America are exceptionally biologically diverse and strongly tied to the communities who live within them. Deforestation in Mexico and the expansion of the agricultural frontier throughout Central America threaten forest systems and these communities, who are among the best stewards of forests. Indigenous and community territories with secure land rights and robust forest management policies have lower deforestation rates. Although many forest communities in Mexico and Central America own or manage a large share of regional forests, their land rights must be more comprehensively secured and protected.

Across the region, violence is often at the base of the economies driving deforestation. This is particularly true for illicit activities such as trafficking illegal products driven by demand from other regions and local smuggling. However, it also extends to activities that operate in both the legal and illegal economy, such as logging and mining. Democratic institutions, already facing the challenge of intensifying political polarization, are often co-opted and struggle to mitigate the harms caused by organized crime and illegality.

Regenerative forest-based economies also face significant hurdles and challenges. On top of the pressure and threats

to the territories driven by illicit, violent economies, the demand for transition minerals is rising, and infrastructure and agro-commodities are expanding.

These factors play out in a region uniquely vulnerable to the effects of climate change. As elsewhere, Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendants, and local communities, and women and youth, face additional layers of exclusion from social and institutional structures rooted in inequitable systems shaped by racism, discrimination, and violence.

In spite of the significant challenges, promising progress and change is underway. Indigenous Peoples, Afro-Descendant Peoples, and local communities are securing and expanding their rights. Strong connections and partnerships are building across citizen movements. Effective policies and governance are being established. New narratives exposing destructive, violent activities driving deforestation are increasing the visibility of harmful practices. The companies profiting from value chains driving deforestation and forest degradation and violating human rights are being held to account. Climate finance mechanisms are supporting effective climate action and resilience. Across the region, work is underway to secure land rights, reverse deforestation, and build climate resilience.

The Mexico & Central America Initiative

The Mexico & Central America Initiative supports a diversity of civil society organizations in Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama, as well as organizations working at the regional level, with a focus on ensuring organizations have the resources and connections they need to be effective and resilient.

Across the region, we support efforts to revitalize forest and land tenure social systems and community efforts to secure and exercise their collective rights, adopt climate and environmental resilience mechanisms in wider agricultural and food systems, address the criminalization and violence targeting communities and environmental defenders, and enhance the governance of tropical forest systems. Specific support is provided to Indigenous Peoples', Afro-Descendant Peoples', and local communities' efforts to secure their rights and livelihoods, and create strong connections with broader citizen movements to contribute to the effective protection of tropical forest systems and improve climate resilience.

What We Support

The Climate and Land Use Alliance supports efforts to:



Secure Forest Communities' Rights and Livelihoods



Advance Governance, Policy & Accountability



Strengthen Movements, Narratives & Collective Action



Shift Financial Systems



Improve Production, Consumption & Trade



Secure Forest Communities' Rights & Livelihoods

Supporting Indigenous Peoples', Afro-Descendant Peoples', and local communities' efforts to secure and exercise their collective rights and land tenure, manage their forests, and support their livelihoods.

In Mexico and across Central America, the fate of tropical forests relies upon forest communities.

Regenerative, forest-based economies sustain resilient livelihoods and protect ecosystems. But increased legal and bureaucratic requirements, the presence of organized crime, and the impacts of climate change, have put pressure on Indigenous Peoples', Afro-Descendant Peoples', and local communities' efforts to maintain local, regenerative economies and livelihoods.

Social tenure systems, such as ejidos, Indigenous territories, and communal forests and lands preserve the cultural continuity of forest communities. Collective property and tenure systems are fundamental to community management of their territories.

Violence and criminalization of forest communities and land defenders threaten their lives and hamper communities' efforts to protect their forests. Secure land rights and tenure and a stop to threats and violence are needed to support communities in affirming their rights and defending their territories from outside incursions.

The Climate and Land Use Alliance works with partners to channel more resources directly to forest communities—particularly Indigenous Peoples', Afro-Descendant Peoples', and local communities' organizations and networks—to support community land stewardship. We support efforts to develop regenerative forest-based economies, and promote self-determination and effective local governance including women and youth. We also support efforts to foster intergenerational dialogue that counters the erosion of collective property and tenure systems and supports effective land rights transfer. We support efforts to increase access to technology for territorial management, and promote experiences with community forest management to inform policy and practice.

WE SUPPORT

Regenerative Forest-Based Economies

Building regenerative forest-based economies, including community forest management and food production systems, to increase economic and climate resilience and improve local governance.

Self-Determination and Resilience

Supporting Indigenous Peoples', Afro-Descendant Peoples', and local communities' self-determination and organizational resilience.

Effective Local Governance

Establishing good governance to build regenerative forest-based economies and deter illicit economies.

Women's Participation

Increasing women's involvement in local governance and decision-making to advance recognition of their rights, and fair distribution of resources and benefits.

Youth Engagement and Intergenerational Transfer of Land Rights

Increasing youth participation in land administration systems, territorial governance, and sustainable economies. Fostering intergenerational dialogue and culturally relevant approaches to secure transfers of territorial land rights and collective tenure systems between generations.

Technology for Forest Management and Livelihoods

Ensuring access to digital tools that support independent monitoring and management of territories and the development of entrepreneurial activities to support livelihoods.

Community Forest Management

Exchanging community forest management experiences from Mexico and Central America to inform policies, programs, and practices around the world.



Advance Governance, Policy & Accountability

Supporting effective environmental and social governance and policies while strengthening accountability to ensure equitable and sustainable management of forest resources and a just energy transition.

Effective environmental and social governance that pushes back on harmful practices and violence-based economies while protecting civic space and ensuring Indigenous self-determination of their resources and territories is crucial across Mexico and Central America.

Throughout the region, democratic institutions and freedoms are threatened. Increasing militarization, repression, and criminalization—and closing civic space—make it increasingly difficult and dangerous to protect and restore forests.

The Climate and Land Use Alliance supports efforts to strengthen governmental systems that support sustainable land use and tackle violence against land defenders, increase the accountability for environmental and human rights abuses, and improve organizations' ability to mitigate violence and address the impacts of migration.

WE SUPPORT

Sustainable Laws, Policies, and Regulations

Enhancing, implementing, and ensuring enforcement of policies that support conservation and sustainable land use, climate objectives, and social and environmental justice.

Subnational Initiatives to Tackle Deforestation

Ensuring jurisdictional initiatives effectively reduce deforestation and forest degradation while prioritizing social justice, human rights, and high-integrity in carbon market-linked activities.

Reducing and Preventing Environmental and Human Rights Violations

Increasing the political and economic risks to companies committing violations and putting in place strong protections to stop environmental and human rights abuses.

Preventing Criminalization and Violence

Supporting Indigenous Peoples', Afro-Descendant Peoples', local communities', and civil society organizations' abilities to tackle the closure of civic space, violence, and criminalization. Increasing access for Indigenous Peoples', Afro-Descendant Peoples', local communities', and civil society organizations' to tools and technology for predicting and preventing criminalization and other forms of violence against land and environmental defenders.

Lessened Impacts of Migration

Developing greater understanding and action to help address the impacts of migration on tropical forest systems.



Strengthen Movements, Narratives & Collective Action

WE SUPPORT

Connected Coalitions

Connecting Indigenous Peoples', Afro-Descendant Peoples', and local communities' organizations and other civil society organizations to build and sustain movements that improve territorial governance, climate justice, and livelihoods.

Influential Advocacy

Advocating for prioritizing rights and territorial governance in regional discussions on issues affecting tropical forest systems, including drug policy, environmental crime, and violence-driven economies.

Rights-Based Narratives

Highlighting narratives that further Indigenous Peoples', Afro-Descendant Peoples', and local communities' rights and territorial governance, and pushing back on narratives undermining collective rights.

Combating Disinformation

Supporting Indigenous Peoples', Afro-Descendant Peoples', and local communities' and civil society organizations in detecting and counteracting narratives harmful to their rights and combating disinformation and attacks targeting land and human rights defenders.

Community-Created Media

Supporting Indigenous Peoples', Afro-Descendant Peoples', and local communities' and civil society organizations in creating and using their own media and communications technologies for sharing information in support of their economic, political, cultural, and social aims.

Amplifying Regenerative Forest-Based Economies

Broadening the reach and improving the effectiveness of narratives on the need for a just, regenerative forest-based economy.

Supporting resilient, inclusive movements, narratives, and collective action on justice and rights, forest protection and regeneration, and climate resilience.

Across Mexico and Central America, Indigenous and forest community organizations are working to secure land rights and the management of their lands and resources. By connecting across movements, their local efforts can influence broader political discussions and bolster collective action. With the support of allies, narratives on the global importance of community forest rights and management for strengthening forest protection and restoration and climate resilience can be elevated to promote supportive policies and practices.

The Climate and Land Use Alliance supports Indigenous Peoples, Afro-Descendant Peoples, and local community organizations and networks in Mexico and Central America in their advocacy efforts by supporting connections and capacities across movements to scale up territorial governance and improve livelihoods, amplify climate justice and regenerative economy narratives, and elevate the voices and perspectives of Indigenous and community organizations in political spaces to inspire greater collective action.



Shift Financial Systems

WE SUPPORT

Finance for Forest Communities

Increasing Indigenous Peoples', Afro-Descendant Peoples', and local communities' access to national and international nature and climate finance, particularly through their own independently-controlled territorial funds.

Increased Financial Transparency and Oversight

Promoting greater transparency and oversight of investments in industries (including unsustainable extractives, infrastructure, and agri-business) to mitigate social and environmental impacts, including through supporting Indigenous Peoples', Afro-Descendants Peoples', and local communities' capacities to monitor harmful practices in their territories.

Investments in Regenerative Forest-Based Economies

Strengthening locally-driven economic opportunities with direct financing to communities and territories.

Supporting just economic transitions that strengthen equity and transparency, revitalize forest economies, and reverse forest loss, while mobilizing more accessible and effective finance for forests and communities.

To halt and reverse forest loss and build climate-resilient livelihoods, more funding must flow to those on the frontlines of stopping deforestation. Forest communities must also have more direct and accessible funding. Simultaneously, increased transparency and social oversight over investment in industries driving deforestation and human rights violations should enable the reduction and mitigation of negative social and environmental impacts. Financial flows must shift from supporting industries and practices driving deforestation, towards regenerative forest economies.

The Climate and Land Use Alliance supports increasing stable, predictable, and accessible funding flows for regenerative forest-based economies and communities, particularly for Indigenous Peoples, Afro-Descendant Peoples, and local community organizations and funds, aligned with broader principles of political independence, and respectful and trust-based investment. We also support greater transparency and accountability to stop investments harming people, their territories, tropical forests, and the climate.



Improve Production, Consumption & Trade

Supporting shifts in agricultural production, consumption, and trade toward lower-emissions, climate-resilient alternatives that benefit people and the environment, and increasing the sustainability of infrastructure and extractive industries in ways that protect communities and nature.

The expansion of large-scale agribusiness and cattle ranching – and the supply chains associated with agave and tequila production and avocado farming in particular – drive deforestation and degradation throughout Mexico and Central America.

Countries across the region are also actively engaged in the transition to renewable energy, increasing the demand for transition minerals and incentivizing unsustainable extractivism and illegal mining operations. The overlap between agri-business production areas, mining concessions, forests, and Indigenous territories results in deforestation, rights violations, and social conflict. Communities and forests are also under threat from illicit economies, including drug trafficking, illegal logging, human trafficking, and arms trafficking.

To stop the harm to forests and communities from damaging supply chains and sectors, environmental and climate resilience and community rights must be prioritized in food and forest-based productive systems. The criminalization and violence targeting forest communities and land defenders must be stopped. And the regulatory and institutional frameworks related to harmful supply chains and sectors must be stronger. To reach global climate goals, it's essential that carbon markets are of high social and environmental integrity.

The Climate and Land Use Alliance supports work to increase the economic and political costs for companies and actors linked to industries that abuse the environment and human rights by advancing deforestation, exposing harmful practices, and holding companies to account. We also support conflict-free supply chains, efforts to ensure high environmental and social integrity in forest carbon markets, and promote sustainable approaches and investments in forest communities' livelihoods.

WE SUPPORT

Deforestation- and Conflict-Free Supply Chains

Transforming supply chains by removing deforestation, land degradation, and rights violations from large-scale agriculture and cattle ranching.

High Integrity in Forest Carbon Markets

Ensuring high social and environmental integrity in forest carbon markets, including by promoting rights recognition and real reductions in both fossil fuel use and land use emissions, helping scale best practices from regional levels, and increasing benefit sharing and active partnerships with Indigenous Peoples, Afro-Descendant Peoples, and local communities.

Effective Monitoring and Enforcement

Strengthening monitoring and enforcement efforts to remove deforestation, land conversion, and rights violations from supply chains.

Exposing Harmful Companies and Sectors

Improving land-based supply chains and regulatory frameworks by exposing damaging practices and proposals by companies and sectors.

Social and Environmental Responsibility

Supporting social and environmental responsibility programs across sectors to promote best practices and investments in supporting Indigenous Peoples, Afro-Descendant Peoples, and local communities.



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