

Women and gender organizations at COP 16

Position on Women and REDD Cancun, December 9, 2010

Women and organizations at the 16th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, taking place in Cancun, Mexico from Nov 29 – Dec 10, 2010, in order to promote and advocate for the recognition and protection of the rights of women and girls within climate change policies, and particularly those women and girls in vulnerable situations and impacted communities, would like to express the following joint concerns regarding proposed policies and incentives to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and enhance carbon stocks (REDD+).

As women from diverse parts of the world, living in diverse conditions and circumstances, we affirm that it is of utmost importance to safeguard the rights of women, including those enshrined in the UN Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). We fully acknowledge the rights of indigenous peoples as referred to in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIPs).

In solidarity with affected communities and peoples, we, women and gender organizations of COP 16 at this UNFCCC meeting in Cancún, Mexico find:

- 1. REDD+ as currently designed will contribute to a global land grab from communities and Indigenous Peoples, which will particularly affect women.** Industrialized-country governments and corporations will only pay for the preservation of forests if they get rights over the carbon in those forests in return. This will have a particular impact on women as their property rights are less secure.
- 2. REDD+ initiatives, as they are currently designed, create perverse incentives and inequities.** Women play a differentiated and key role in forest conservation and restoration. The current REDD+ design is that actors will receive carbon credits for reducing their deforestation. Women are, overall, less responsible for deforestation and forest degradation and therefore, according to this set-up, they would be less eligible for forest carbon credits.
- 3. REDD+ as an offset mechanism will not address climate change as it takes away the responsibility for mitigation from the North and shifts it to the South.** Contracts to provide pollution licenses for fossil fuel-dependent corporations will potentially harm communities elsewhere who are suffering from the fossil fuel extraction or pollution for which those corporations are responsible. Women and girls in these communities carry a disproportionately higher amount of this burden. For that reason, forest carbon offsets do not only impact indigenous communities in the South.

4. The commercialization of life and carbon markets are incompatible with traditional and indigenous cosmologies and a violation of the sacred.¹ Women, as holders of at least half of all traditional knowledge, are integral to the preservation and living practice of this knowledge. Many indigenous tribal traditions in their historic responsibility protect the sacredness of Mother Earth and are defenders of the Circle of Life which includes biodiversity, forests, flora, fauna and all living species.

What Is Needed

What is needed is the implementation of projects that are women's rights-based, strengthen gender justice, and are people centered. These projects should bring environmental and social benefits to all women and men. We want gender sensitive, equitable and just mechanisms that do not repeat the mistakes of the past by promoting monoculture tree plantations.

We recognise the need for industrialised countries to focus on new economies governed by climate justice, the absolute limits and boundaries of ecological sustainability and the carrying capacities of the earth. Such economies should strengthen and promote gender equality and the equitable sharing of global and local resources, and promote the encouragement and support of self sustaining communities..

Real alternatives to REDD+ already exist and should be promoted:

- To recognize and guarantee women's rights to land and territories, which includes collectively demarcating and titling Indigenous Peoples' territories, where most of the world's forests are found. This has proven to be one of the most effective measures for reducing deforestation and supporting the livelihood and rights of forest-dependent women, girls and communities;
- To ensure compliance with CEDAW and other human rights instruments, including UNDRIPs;
- To halt deforestation and forest degradation, which is key to secure women's livelihoods. Efforts to stop forest loss must address the underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation and climate change, including:
 - fossil fuel extraction, mining and large-scale hydro-electric dam construction
 - demand-side drivers like the demand for beef, pulp, lumber, palm oil and industrial bioenergy; and
 - the need to abandon all forms of support to large-scale monoculture tree plantations and logging concessions, which jeopardize the ecosystems women depend on.

Funds should be invested in programmes that directly support alternative rights-based forms of forest conservation and restoration that are already known to work. These include Indigenous territories and community conserved areas that incorporate and ensure gender justice.

¹ See also the political position of the International Forum of Indigenous Peoples on Climate Change for the first week of negotiations of the 16th Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.