



Abstract Submission for BIEN Congress 2022

Title: "Can a basic income for people who live in the rainforest save the rainforest?"

Rainforests are essential carbon sinks. Their preservation is critical to mitigating climate change, protecting terrestrial biodiversity, and supporting the livelihoods of 805 million people around the world. Whilst Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) comprise less than 5% of the world's population, they manage or have rights to at least 25% of the planet's land surface and protect an estimated 80% of global biodiversity.

To address this goal, several market-based mechanisms, such as REDD+, have been implemented. These strategies are founded on the rationale that putting a price on biodiversity would lead to resource conservation rather than extraction. However, empirical results have demonstrated that these payments for ecosystem services mostly failed to address poverty and environmental destruction.

Despite climate finance totalling record amounts year on year, reaching USD 632 billion in 2019/2020, the historical and contemporaneous contribution of IPLCs to climate mitigation and adaptation has been effectively ignored. Between 2010 - 2020, they received less than 1% of all development funding to address climate change.

Our presentation introduces an alternative approach, providing IPLCs with unconditional cash transfers (UCTs) to simultaneously address their marginalisation and rainforest protection. This idea relies on recent research and reports which show that lands managed by indigenous communities have lower rates of deforestation compared to neighbouring territories and other management systems. Successful forest preservation equates primarily to empowering right holders who face difficult socio-economic, political and cultural challenges. Their resilience is the most effective way of reducing the vulnerability of the ecosystems in which they live.

We present a UCT strategy in the making, developed by the UK-based climate charity Cool Earth and its partners in Peru. We reflect on this experience and discuss its benefits, trade-offs and challenges in terms of addressing marginalisation, greater agency, forest protection and, ultimately, climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Additional texts

Cool Earth believes that the state of the rainforest will continue to worsen if Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) continue to be marginalised. Research over the last decade, including Cool Earth's, shows that people who live in the rainforest have historically been the best at shaping and stewarding these ecosystems ([FAO, 2021](#); [Dawson, N. M., 2021](#); [Sze, K. S., 2021](#), [The State of the Indigenous Peoples' and Local Communities' Lands and Territories, 2021](#)). Whilst IPLCs comprise less than 5% of the world's population, they manage or have rights to at least 37 million km² of land ([Garnett *et al.*, 2018](#)) and protect an estimated 80% of global biodiversity ([World Bank, 2008](#))

With global markets influencing even the most remote of economies, climate change disrupting food and production systems, and pandemics severely undermining the resilience of indigenous peoples worldwide, we can no longer assume that continuing as they have without additional support will result in continued protection of the rainforest.

Protecting the rainforest is complex. Ensuring that its best guardians have the choice, the tools and the foresight to continue doing so is even harder. There is no-one-size fits all approach to rainforest protection ([McGill University and the Stockholm Resilience Centre, 2021](#)). Cool Earth's cash giving projects recognise and support the diversity of approaches and innovations required to prevent and reduce tropical deforestation and degradation.

With payments for ecosystem services (PES) initiatives too rarely delivering socio-economic and environmental gains ([Chan, K.M.A., 2017](#)), with only a fraction of climate finance reaching people on the ground ([International Institute for Environment and Development, 2017](#)), with calls for climate justice intensifying and with the window for climate action now being measured in months rather than decades.

References

1. [Forest Peoples Programme, 2012](#)
2. [Garnett *et al.*, 2018](#)
3. [Global Landscape of Climate Finance, 2021](#)
4. [Rainforest Foundation Norway, 2021](#)