



CLIMATE AND LAND USE ALLIANCE | 2018-2022

Mexico and Central America Initiative



Climate and Land Use Alliance
Cultivating solutions for people and the planet

GOAL

We aim to protect forests and the climate by strengthening indigenous and community land rights and forest management in Mexico and Central America and by sharing experiences from the region with forest communities and countries around the world.

WHY MEXICO AND CENTRAL AMERICA?

The forests of Mexico and Central America are among the most biologically diverse in the world, and are home to some 12 million people. But deforestation in Mexico and the expansion of the agricultural frontier throughout Central America threaten these forests and the communities who live within them. Such communities are among the best defenders of forests—studies show that indigenous territories with secure land rights and forest management policies have lower deforestation rates and greenhouse gas emissions. More than 60% of Mexican forests are on lands owned or managed by communities. Communities with secure rights to their land, and the Mexican federal and state governments, need support in their efforts to strengthen community forestry. Although many forest communities in Central America own or manage a large share of regional forests, their land rights must be more comprehensively secured and protected.

Securing indigenous and community land rights and promoting community forest management is not only important on the local level for Mexico and Central America—it is also critical to global efforts to reduce climate change. Public policies in many other tropical forest countries have often failed to effectively protect the rights and livelihoods of forest communities. Experiences in Mexico and Central America prove that promoting the rights of indigenous peoples and rural communities to manage their forests is a powerful way to protect forests while mitigating climate change, conserving biodiversity, and improving local livelihoods. Mexico and Central America's experiences provide lessons other tropical forest nations can follow in their efforts to reduce forest loss and slow climate change by strengthening community forest rights and management.

The Mexico and Central America Initiative

The Climate and Land Use Alliance focuses its efforts in Mexico and Central America on supporting regional indigenous peoples' organizations, grassroots community forest organizations, policymakers, and other funders in their efforts to conserve forests by securing the rights and livelihoods of forest communities. We aim to ensure that Mexico's federal, state, and municipal policies effectively promote inclusive models of community forest management and protect communities' rights to make decisions about natural resources. Throughout Central America, we work with governments and international donors to advance inclusive forest management policies and

to protect the rights and safety of forest communities and land defenders. Our efforts aim to support and strengthen rural grassroots organizations across the region so that forest communities can more effectively advocate for their demands.

The Alliance also supports efforts to share lessons about community land rights and management in the Mexico and Central America region with other tropical forest countries around the world to encourage the adoption of more successful and equitable land policies and practices.

WE SUPPORT

We support efforts in the following areas:

1 **Sharing Lessons from Community Forest Rights and Management**

Promoting land rights and community forest management experiences from Mexico and Central America to inform policies, programs, and practitioners around the world to more effectively pursue climate change mitigation, biodiversity conservation, and secure community forest rights and livelihoods.

2 **Community Land Management in Mexico**

Advancing inclusive models of community forest management and communities' rights to make decisions affecting their natural resources within Mexico's federal, state, and municipal policies and investments.

3 **Secure Land and Resource Rights in Central America**

Encouraging Central American governments and international donors to adopt policies and programs that provide forest communities with secure land and resource rights and promote inclusive models of community management in forested landscapes.

4 **Indigenous and Community Forest Organizations**

Supporting rural grassroots organizations in Mexico and Central America in their advocacy efforts by helping them strengthen their governance, leadership, inclusiveness, and access to resources while protecting their members from violence and criminalization for defending their rights.





1

WE SUPPORT

Sharing Lessons from Community Forest Rights and Management

The benefits of Mexico and Central America's progressive land rights and forest management policies can extend far beyond the region's forests and communities. By elevating the voices and perspectives of indigenous and community organizations within Mexico and Central America, forested countries around the world can draw on these experiences to inform and inspire more equitable and effective policies and practices in their own regions.

To that end, the Alliance works to increase the political participation of and exchanges between local grassroots and indigenous leaders, and to support the development of platforms for community organizations from forests around the world to share their regional experiences and advocate with the broader global climate change community. Recognizing that each country is distinct, the Alliance will continue to work to identify the most successful avenues for these policies to be applied and implemented in other regions.

WHERE WE FOCUS

Grassroots Advocacy and Exchange

Connecting leaders from grassroots forest community and indigenous organizations, including women and youth, from around the world to share experiences and lessons on securing forest rights and managing their lands with one another and with regional and international decision makers, practitioners, funders, and opinion leaders.

Allies for Community Forest Rights and Management

Building support amongst policymakers, opinion leaders, and practitioners for implementing successful community land rights and management policies, programs, finance, and practices by demonstrating their contribution to global and national climate and sustainable development goals.



2

WE SUPPORT

Community Land Management in Mexico

Mexico occupies a unique position among the ranks of other forested countries—it has a long and successful history of community managed forests. In fact, over 60% of the nation’s 64 million hectares of forested land is owned or managed by rural and indigenous communities. Mexico has also been a global leader in advancing efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+). To maintain and expand Mexico’s achievements in conserving its forests, communities and grassroots organizations should be empowered to advocate for development that respects their rights and management of their lands and resources.

The Alliance will work to develop a strong evidence base from which to advance future policies that maintain and increase the contribution of Mexico’s forests to climate change mitigation while ensuring that community rights are protected and maintained. We will also focus on building collaboration between funders and policymakers to support new community pilot projects, and invest in the increased capacity of community organizations to ensure the long term success of current policies and programs.

WHERE WE FOCUS

Public Sector Support for Community Management

Encouraging federal and state support of community forest management by demonstrating the social and environmental benefits of strong community forest management policies and programs.

Strong Community Forest Enterprises

Demonstrating the benefits that simplified tax policies and regulatory frameworks have on the ability of small community forest enterprises to manage, harvest, and sell forest products.

Reducing Threats from Extractive and Infrastructure Development

Enabling indigenous and grassroots organizations concerned with the social and environmental threats of large-scale industrial development projects to advocate for development that respects communities’ rights and management of land and resources, including efforts to achieve the goals of sustainability agreements.

Inclusive Forest Policies and Programs for Women and Youth

Supporting efforts to advance the rights of women and youth in forest communities and grassroots organizations and to address their needs related to natural resources in public and privately-funded forestry initiatives.

3

WE SUPPORT

Secure Land and Resource Rights in Central America

Over the last decade, large areas of forested indigenous territories in Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama received official titles from their respective governments. While this represents an important step, there is still widespread uncertainty across Central America about different groups' land and resource rights. In some cases, this has led to land grabbing and illegal land occupations by non-indigenous groups. Proposed investments in new extractive and infrastructure projects—as well as the expanding agricultural frontier—further threaten the rights and safety of those living in forest communities. Secure land and resource rights and expanded community forest management can empower these communities, while significantly reducing deforestation in Central America.

The Alliance supports negotiations between governments and indigenous organizations to establish methods for resolving land conflicts, and works to strengthen community capacity for marking and monitoring their territories with support from civil society. We also encourage the development of pilot projects to generate evidence that advances the case for secure territorial rights.

WHERE WE FOCUS

Indigenous and Forest Communities' Tenure Security

Supporting policy development, improved forest monitoring, and stronger grassroots organization to help secure indigenous and community land rights, renew forest concessions, and protect the region's forests through community management.

Effective, Inclusive Funding for Community Forestry

Ensuring public funding and private investment in forest management policies and projects is transparent, accountable, evidence-based, and inclusive of a diversity of perspectives, with participation of indigenous and local forest communities in decision-making.

Reducing Threats from Extractive and Infrastructure Development

Enabling grassroots organizations concerned with the social and environmental threats of mining, energy, and related infrastructure projects to advocate for development that respects communities' rights and management of land and resources.

Protection of Land Defenders

Calling for an end to the violence, killing, and criminalization of environmental and land activists by drawing increased media attention to the issue, and protecting the safety of current and future forest community leaders.



4

WE SUPPORT

Indigenous and Community Forest Organizations

Throughout Mexico and Central America, strong networks of indigenous and community forest organizations are working to raise the visibility of land rights and community forest management, promote supportive policies, and train and educate fellow activists. Key to this is their international advocacy work with other grassroots organizations from the Amazon Basin to southeast Asia and Africa on the global importance of community forest rights and management as a strategy for reducing deforestation and climate change.

The Alliance supports building technical capacity, improving governance, and promoting inclusivity within these organizations. Our efforts aim to strengthen these networks, elevate their voices on the global stage, and further empower them to advocate for their land and resource rights.

WHERE WE FOCUS

Capacity, Leadership, and Inclusivity

Empowering proficient leaders and activists with relevant technical, communications, and management skills to promote community forest management, while ensuring the inclusion of women and youth.

Strong Internal Governance

Supporting improvements in internal governance and strengthening planning, advocacy, communications, administration, resource mobilization, and alliances to enable organizations to become more effective and efficient.



Image Credits in Order of Appearance

Josiah Townsend

Carlos E. Kurzel, ACOFOP

Joel Redman, If Not Us Then Who

Sara Cuervo, Consejo Civil Mexicano para la Silvicultura

MASTA

Weaving Ties

Ainhoa Goma, Oxfam