

REDD COMMUNITY PROTOCOLS

A Community Approach to Ensuring
the Local Integrity of REDD



NATURAL JUSTICE

1.OVERVIEW

Natural Justice is proposing a community-based approach to REDD. Through a participatory process of developing a protocol and advocating for their rights, indigenous and local communities will be better able to respond to the grave concerns we share about REDD's potential to further marginalize forest-dependent communities. This pamphlet is a primer on:

1. the relevance of community protocols to REDD;
2. how a REDD community protocol can be developed and used by communities; and
3. what a REDD protocol might look like.

2. WHAT IS A COMMUNITY PROTOCOL?

Community protocols are being developed within the context of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Indigenous and local communities have certain rights under the CBD but are often denied due process at the local level because they are unable to effectively assert these rights. They have begun to develop community protocols that illustrate the following information for other stakeholders such as government agencies, REDD investment funds, conservation agencies, and NGOs:

- who the community is;
- the extent of their territories and details of their resources;
- details of their traditional leadership and structures;
- how their knowledge, innovations and practices have conserved the biodiversity in their territories;
- the inter-linkages between their culture, spirituality, customary laws, traditional knowledge, and biodiversity;
- the factors upon which their ways of life depend;
- their challenges; and
- their plans for culturally-sensitive endogenous development.

From the above information outlined in their protocols, communities then draw on the law to assert the following:

- their rights under international and national laws; and
- specific rights that other stakeholders are required to respect, including their customary use of biodiversity and the application of the principle of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) to any intended use of their natural resources or traditional knowledge.

3. WHAT IS THE RELEVANCE OF COMMUNITY PROTOCOLS TO REDD?

Community protocols can be used in the context of REDD to affirm the rights of communities to:

- continue their customary use of their resources;
- require FPIC before any proposed uses of forest resources, including REDD projects;
- be involved in the design of REDD projects; and
- monitor and evaluate REDD projects.

Community protocols can serve as the impetus for effective REDD projects based on the very livelihood strategies and bio-cultural ways of life that contribute to forest conservation in the first place. Community protocols can therefore help ensure the local integrity of REDD and other international efforts to prevent forest degradation and climate change.

**Please contact harry@naturaljustice.org.za
For more information visit www.naturaljustice.org.za**

4. DEVELOPING AND USING A COMMUNITY PROTOCOL

The process of developing a community protocol is empowering. International environmental laws and frameworks are inaccessible to many forest-dependent communities. Indigenous and local communities require time and information to consider their context-specific options before they can be expected to make informed decisions within novel legal and policy frameworks. REDD must support a process that enables communities to reflect upon the inter-linkages and mutually reinforcing relationships between forests, culture and customary laws and to clearly illustrate the bio-cultural foundations of their ways of life in a format accessible to other REDD stakeholders. Their rights to FPIC regarding any forest-related activities and to participate in defining the terms of any REDD agreements are also paramount.

Community protocols are developed using participatory tools such as mapping to illustrate communities' bio-cultural resources and customary norms of resource use and to detail the terms and conditions upon which FPIC must be acquired. Finally, asserting their rights to engage with other REDD stakeholders on the basis of equality enables communities to achieve social and environmental justice.

Customary Uses of Forest Resources

The relationship between communities and the forests they live in is dynamic, and in many cases, their local knowledge, innovations and practices are integral to forest conservation. By articulating such aspects of their ways of life, communities are able to directly refer to and call upon the international and national laws intended to support them. A REDD community protocol can be used to express this relationship and examine the forests within a greater ecological context embedded in the very bio-cultural values that conserve them.

Free, Prior and Informed Consent

Only legally empowered communities can truly engage in decision-making processes about access to and use of the forests in which they live. Communities can use their protocols not only to communicate their views on the REDD mechanism to other stakeholders but also to assert their rights to culturally appropriate consultations towards FPIC for any REDD-related policy measures or projects. They can go beyond merely stating that they do or do not want their traditional territory to be part of a REDD project by defining specific project elements to be included. They can also identify the values by which they will monitor and evaluate REDD projects in order to further clarify their rights and priorities to other stakeholders.

Equality in REDD Negotiations for the Benefit of All Stakeholders

Achieving FPIC from communities improves local support for and overall stability and longevity of REDD agreements. By approaching REDD as more equal partners, communities are better able to engage with other stakeholders such as investors, researchers and governments on their own terms and to negotiate according to the bio-cultural values that help conserve forests. Thus, the community protocol process and subsequent agreement on the terms of REDD-related policy measures or projects are beneficial not only to communities but also to REDD investors and other stakeholders.

Community-determined Social and Environmental Justice

The development of community protocols by forest-dependent communities is one way in which they may be able to respond to and ensure the local integrity of REDD. By asserting communities' rights to FPIC and needs in terms of traditional, non-destructive uses of forests that should be allowed to continue, community protocols can provide opportunities to more directly influence the terms of REDD projects and to ensure that communities remain the final arbiters of any forest-related activities.