Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD)

E-Learning Series on International Frameworks that Support Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, and Their Territories and Areas
# Table of Contents

**Introduction** .................................................................................................................. 3  
  Module Overview ........................................................................................................... 3  
  Objectives .................................................................................................................... 3  
  Key Concepts & Terms .................................................................................................. 3  
  Who Is This E-learning Module Directed Towards? .................................................... 4  

**Context** .......................................................................................................................... 4  
  Guiding Questions for Discussion ................................................................................ 5  
  History ......................................................................................................................... 5  
  Guiding Questions for Self-Assessment .................................................................... 6  

**Key Issues** .................................................................................................................... 7  
  Reference Levels ....................................................................................................... 7  
  Funding ....................................................................................................................... 7  
  Guiding Questions for Discussion ............................................................................. 9  
  Concerns .................................................................................................................... 9  
  Safeguards ................................................................................................................ 10  

**Current Programmes** .................................................................................................. 11  
  UN-REDD .................................................................................................................. 12  
  Community Experience ............................................................................................. 13  
  World Bank .............................................................................................................. 13  

**Summary** ....................................................................................................................... 14  

**Additional Resources** ................................................................................................. 14  
  Other Relevant E-modules ....................................................................................... 14  
  Further Reading ....................................................................................................... 14  
  Acknowledgements .................................................................................................. 15  
  Contact & Request for Feedback ........................................................................... 15
INTRODUCTION

Module Overview

This module seeks to prepare communities and their allies to engage proactively with the international framework for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD+). It briefly describes the rationale behind and plans for REDD+. It then looks at the key issues that have emerged around REDD+, focusing especially on the concerns with its current status and the safeguards that are being developed to attempt to protect community rights. It closes by looking at the current forms in which REDD+ is being implemented.

This module is part of a toolkit for community facilitators on biocultural community protocols. The complete toolkit, including additional e-learning modules, is available at: www.community-protocols.org.

Objectives

1. To gain an understanding of the concepts, opportunities, and challenges associated with REDD+;
2. To prepare communities to engage in the process of developing REDD+ as active participants and advocates; and
3. To support communities to explore critical questions and ensure the realization of important safeguards if they are asked to participate in a REDD+ project.

Key Concepts & Terms

Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD)
- A proposed intervention under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to provide financial incentives for ‘developing’ countries to reduce carbon emissions within their borders and promote low-carbon development. REDD+ includes the role of conservation, sustainable forest management, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

Climate change
- Intensifying changes in weather patterns around the world driven by the increased average temperature of the globe’s surface.

Greenhouse effect
- The greenhouse effect is a layer of persistent gases (such as carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and ozone) in the earth’s atmosphere that traps heat from the sun. As the concentration of these gases increase in the atmosphere, more heat is trapped, increasing global temperatures and driving climate change.

Carbon emissions
- Levels of carbon released into the earth’s atmosphere primarily through human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels and the destruction of forests and peatlands. Other major sources of carbon include the thawing of permafrost.
Who Is This E-learning Module Directed Towards?

This e-learning module may be useful if your community has any of the following:
- Significant area of forested territory;
- Desire to ensure the protection of forests in your area and in forests around the world;
- Concerns about land tenure security as the value of standing forests is recognized; and/or
- Contact from organizations or governments interested in implementing a REDD+ project with your community or in your territory or area.

CONTEXT

The world's climate is changing. We are cutting down forests, driving cars, flying planes, and mass-producing livestock and everyday products at increasing rates. All of these human activities require the use of fossil fuels and raw materials and create massive amounts of persistent gases such as carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide (see Figure 1). These gases concentrate in the atmosphere and trap heat, contributing to the greenhouse effect. As concentrations increase, so does the amount of trapped heat, increasing the earth's average temperature over time. This is dramatically changing weather patterns in unpredictable ways and driving phenomena such as ocean acidification and coral bleaching. People are having difficulty responding to such changes, especially when their livelihoods depend directly on predictable patterns and natural cycles. Generally, the impacts of climate change are more intense in areas closer to the equator and at the North and South poles, though they are increasingly being felt around the entire world.

Plants naturally absorb large amounts of carbon dioxide. When they die, they release that carbon dioxide back into the air. When no new plants replace the plant that died, this increases the amount of carbon dioxide in circulation. Standing forests thus hold massive amounts of carbon dioxide.
Deforestation contributes to an estimated 18-25% of carbon emissions, which remain in the atmosphere for a long time. If this destruction could be stopped, climate change could be reduced.

This is the idea behind the concept of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD). Essentially, REDD aims to generate funds to reduce emissions through protecting forests in order to slow the onset of climate change. REDD+ includes the role of conservation, sustainable forest management, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks. Since most of the world’s remaining forests are in the ‘developing world’ and most of the world’s emissions are from the ‘developed world’, the majority of funding for REDD+ will be directed from the latter to the former.

As an international agreement on REDD+ is still being negotiated, this module will approach the topic through two sections. The first section will discuss the context and history of REDD+ and explain the various options being considered for financial mechanisms. The second section will briefly describe the current programmes of UN-REDD and the World Bank that are preparing for REDD+. Overall, the module intends to support communities to consider some of the main issues, concerns, and opportunities. It can also be used as a basis to consider whether and how to engage proactively with ongoing international negotiations and national developments on REDD+ to ensure that they reflect local priorities and realities.

Guiding Questions for Discussion

- Have you observed any changes in weather patterns throughout your lifetime? What impact have they had?
- Do you live near a forest? How has it changed? How has this affected your livelihoods or how you interact with the forest?
- What do you think about using funding to conserve forests? What might be some of the challenges to ensuring success?
- Do you know areas around you where REDD+ might help conserve forests?

History

REDD+ has been proposed to curb emissions from deforestation and degradation in order to slow climate change. Despite deforestation’s major role in climate change, early agreements to reduce emissions under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) did not include specific commitments to address deforestation. It wasn’t until 2005 that the 11th Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC in Montreal officially considered reducing deforestation as part of the plan to slow climate change. In later Conferences, it was agreed that reducing forest degradation should also be included. In 2007, the 13th Conference of Parties in Bali agreed that there should be more

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is the main international forum for discussing and making plans for curbing emissions and slowing climate change. Every year, the countries that are part of the UNFCCC meet to discuss and negotiate plans for addressing climate change. These meetings are called Conferences of Parties. The most important agreement to come from the UNFCCC was the Kyoto Protocol, where most ‘developed’ countries agreed to cut emissions. The Kyoto Protocol does not include a plan for deforestation and expires in 2012. Many hope that REDD+ will be part of a post-Kyoto agreement.

Box 1: Background on the UNFCCC
than reducing deforestation and forest degradation; forest conservation, sustainable management of forests, and the enhancement of carbon stocks should also be considered. This is when REDD became REDD+. In Bali, a plan was developed for establishing REDD+. This plan mapped out the path to finalizing an official REDD+ agreement at the 15th Conference of Parties in Copenhagen in 2009 in order to begin implementing REDD+ after 2012. However, no final agreement was reached in Copenhagen. In 2010, COP 16 in Cancun appeared to move close to establishing a final REDD agreement, but it was still not finalized by the end of COP 17 in 2011.

**Figure 2:** Timeline of key outcomes and events relating to REDD and REDD+

### Guiding Questions for Self-Assessment

1. **What does ‘UNFCCC’ stand for?**
   - a. United Nations for Combating Climate Change
   - b. United Nations for Consensus on Climate Change
   - c. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

2. **How often is a Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC held?**
   - a. Every two years
   - b. Every year
   - c. Whenever one is necessary

3. **At which UNFCCC Conference of Parties was the final REDD+ programme agreed to?**
   - a) 13th
   - b) 15th
   - c) 17th
   - d) Still no agreement

Answers: 1(c); 2(b); 3(d)
KEY ISSUES

Before an international agreement is concluded, there are still significant issues to be addressed. The majority of these issues are contained within three broad areas: reference levels, funding, and safeguards. The following section begins to outline the key areas of agreement and debate within these areas, with an emphasis on how each may positively or negatively impact communities. It begins by elaborating upon the arguments around reference levels and finance before considering some of the most pressing community concerns and discussing the safeguards that have been proposed to address these concerns.

Reference Levels

In reducing deforestation, a significant task is establishing a system that effectively measures whether deforestation has been avoided. When a REDD+ project begins, the country has to demonstrate that if it were not for that funding, the forests would have been destroyed or degraded. This is a complex task as there will be challenges in implementing any plan. Some feel that this approach sets perverse incentives, punishing countries for not having engaged in deforestation historically and rewarding those that have deforested. In this scenario, if funding is tied to preventing ongoing deforestation, countries that are allowing extensive deforestation currently will receive more funding than countries that are already protecting their forests. There is emerging consensus that REDD+ must not merely give incentives to countries with high rates of deforestation to reduce them, it must also reward countries that have traditionally maintained low levels of deforestation.

The key term in this issue is reference levels. A reference level is the current rate of deforestation. The ‘+’ in REDD+ indicates that increasing forest cover and sustainable forest management should also be considered. However, the current benchmark used by the latest Conference of Parties in 2011 is emissions from deforestation measured in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year. Countries are now being supported to establish their current reference levels amidst great debate about whether reference levels can actually be measured with enough accuracy to make them credible enough for the basis for REDD+. Others see the potential for reference levels to be falsely inflated, meaning that improvements against the reference levels might not be actual reductions in deforestation.

At COP 17 in 2011, the UNFCCC’s Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) was asked to develop a process for reviewing reference levels submitted by Parties. This has the potential to help ensure that reference level systems are comparable.¹

Funding

Perhaps the most significant issue around REDD+ is funding. The entire programme is based around providing financial incentives to prevent deforestation and degradation. The burden for funding must fall upon ‘developed’ countries but the mechanism for guiding that is a topic of vigorous debate. It is unclear what impact the 17th Conference of Parties in Durban will have upon this as it moves towards charging ‘developing’ nations with some responsibilities for mitigating climate change. Though there are

¹ See Draft COP 17 Decision on guidance on systems for providing information on safeguards and forest reference levels. Available online.
innumerable proposals for generating REDD+ funding, they broadly fall under two ideas: carbon markets or a REDD+ fund. These plans differ in the way they raise funds and the way they allocate them.

**Carbon Markets**

Carbon markets are already used by many developed countries to manage their carbon emissions and are being backed as a means to finance REDD and REDD+. One major reason is that it is more likely to raise finances from the private sector. Carbon markets could also help developed countries avoid actually reducing emissions; emitters can purchase the right to pollute by paying to prevent deforestation somewhere else.

In existing carbon markets, companies and countries are assigned a maximum amount of emissions. If they emit less, the amount they did not emit can be sold as a *carbon credit*. If they emit more than the maximum, they can also buy the right to do so through carbon credits.

To finance REDD+, some want to calculate the reference level of carbon dioxide emitted each year from deforestation and degradation. Carbon credits could be earned by reducing the rate of deforestation below the reference level. Those credits could be sold to companies or countries who need to offset their own emissions. This system determines both how the funds will be raised and distributed. While there is not yet a final plan, some feel these credits could be sold on the current carbon markets, while most believe there should be a separate REDD+ market.

**Challenges**

Many say that carbon markets allow developed countries to avoid cutting their own emissions because they can merely buy carbon credits from developing countries to curb emissions there. This means that despite the large amounts of money to prevent deforestation, there could be limited actual reductions in emissions because the market will allow developed countries to continue to emit either the same or higher amounts of carbon dioxide.

**REDD+ Fund**

Many who oppose carbon markets feel that developed countries should create and finance a fund that pays developing nations for reductions in deforestation. The fund (or funds) could be included in an agreement with different countries, companies, or other organizations committing in different ways. Many representatives of developing countries support a fund in some form to ensure that reducing emissions is the responsibility of developed nations. Such a fund would reduce the likelihood that REDD+ will be used to enable developed countries to avoid reducing other forms of emissions.

Once this fund is established, it will provide payments for activities that reduce deforestation in accordance with the system of reference levels that is established. Some plans suggest that these funds could go to any community or organization involved in reducing deforestation, but much of the funding will likely go to governments.

The 16th Conference of Parties in Cancun directed the establishment of a fund to support climate change adaptation (coping with the impact of climate change) and mitigation (slowing the impact of climate change).
change). Dubbed the Green Climate Fund, a Transitional Committee was also tasked with its design. The broad design of the fund, which will attempt to raise US$100 billion by 2020, was agreed to in Durban, though there is no binding plan for raising these funds. While this fund will not be exclusively for REDD+, it can be used to support it.

**Combination**

Having a carbon market and a REDD+ fund are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Some feel that they could co-exist. Most who embrace this idea suggest that a fund could be used to prepare for a carbon market.

**Guiding Questions for Discussion**

*Should forests even be given a monetary value? What are the advantages and disadvantages of doing so?*

*How do you think should REDD+ be funded? What are the pros and cons of each?*

  a) Some form of fund  
  b) Carbon markets  
  c) Some combination  
  d) Something else entirely

*How might funds to prevent deforestation create perverse incentives or unintended side effects? How could they be better designed so this doesn’t happen?*

**Concerns**

There are many concerns that Indigenous peoples and local communities have expressed many concerns with REDD+, including equating forests with money. An essential question is whether such funding diminishes the intangible and multiple non-monetary values of forests, particularly as they relate to communities. Other concerns include the potential for communities to be forced out of forests by policies, how communities without firm property protections will maintain their current livelihoods and dwellings if individuals and companies begin to value their forests monetarily, and whether funds will actually be directed towards intended recipients and purposes.

**Policies**

Historically, many well-meaning policies to protect areas from deforestation, degradation, or other harms have dispossessed entire populations, including those who have conserved forests and used them sustainably. This has not only taken away people’s homes, but it has devastated their livelihoods, cultures, and broader ways of life. Beyond this, many studies have shown that this method of protecting forests is not as effective as engaging with communities who already live and subsist in and around the area.

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2 See Paragraph 102 in the official UNFCCC report of COP 17. Available online.
There are also fears that as REDD+ provides money to governments that protect forests, policies that fence off forests and dispossess forest-dwelling communities will become more prominent. While REDD+ plans have pledged to engage local communities, the safeguards against such harmful policies are not yet clear.

**Tenure security**

As standing forests become increasingly lucrative, organizations or individuals may want to acquire them to receive REDD+ funding. As many Indigenous peoples and local communities do not have formal ownership or tenure of the land on which they live, they may be vulnerable to forced evictions.

**Corruption**

Any system would struggle to transparently manage such massive amounts of new funds. On top of that, REDD+ will be implemented in many countries with known corruption and governance challenges. Given that most Indigenous peoples and local communities have little say in how governments handle funds at the national level, it is likely that they will be most affected by these issues.

**Safeguards**

Addressing these concerns is an immense challenge. Some argue that they outweigh any positives that may come from REDD+ and argue against any form of REDD+. Others feel that safeguards can be developed to protect communities against these challenges and ensure that residents of areas engaging in REDD+ actually benefit. Given these challenges, it is absolutely vital that REDD+ is developed with the strongest possible safeguards, especially for communities. While language and implementation often differ, there is currently great potential to shape REDD+ by engaging in relevant international and national negotiations. The stronger the safeguard language is at the outset, the more likely communities will benefit, or at least not suffer, during implementation. Stronger language also provides more options for recourse if communities are negatively impacted by REDD+.

The first question to determine safeguards is where REDD+ is being implemented and by whom. The two leading institutions to manage REDD+, UN-REDD and the World Bank (explored further below), each must follow pre-existing safeguards that offer potential protection for communities. The level of protection is also highly dependent on the country in which REDD+ is implemented, as national legislation and policy around community rights often have more direct impact than international law and policy.

While there have been minor advances in a number of the Conferences of Parties on safeguards, the Cancun Agreements from the 16th Conference of Parties in 2010 offer the most promising language. These Agreements were also notable for significantly broadening the scope of REDD+. They state that “respect for knowledge of indigenous peoples and members of local communities” must be promoted,
specifically noting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which asserts comprehensive rights of Indigenous peoples. The Agreements also call for the “full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular indigenous peoples and local communities, in REDD+.” They also mention the importance of transparency in governance structures. Finally, the Agreements assert that REDD+ should not support the conversion of natural forests, which guards against the suggestion by some that natural forests could be replaced with commercial interests that also receive REDD+ funding.³

The 17th Conference of Parties in 2011 in Durban did not expand upon these rights but did emphasize the importance of adhering to them in developing countries’ REDD+ strategies. It also asks developing countries to provide a summary of information on how they have implemented these safeguards. SBSTA has been directed to “consider the need for further guidance to ensure transparency, consistency, comprehensiveness and effectiveness when informing on how all safeguards are respected”, which will be further considered at the 18th Conference of Parties in 2012.⁴

**Action Point: Engage with SBSTA Negotiations**

The Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) is charged with developing safeguards for REDD+ as well as a number of other issues. If you feel passionately about the issues raised so far, consider engaging with SBSTA by submitting your views and attending meetings. More information is available online.

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**CURRENT PROGRAMMES**

Instead of waiting for a final international agreement, many programmes have already begun to make REDD+ a reality. They will provide feedback to the UNFCCC on effective strategies and will lay the foundation for the official REDD+ programme when it comes into existence. Only a few have significant scale and impact. In particular, the United Nations REDD Programme (UN-REDD) is a partnership between three UN agencies that is piloting REDD+ programmes in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The World Bank has set up the Forest Investment Programme and the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility. Both UN-REDD and the World Bank are attempting to position themselves to be the primary implementer of REDD+ but they are also working to coordinate their activities, especially in countries

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³ See Paragraph 70 for the scope of REDD+ and Annex 1, Paragraph 2 for language on safeguards in the official UNFCCC report on COP 16. Available online.
⁴ See Draft COP 17 Decision on guidance on systems for providing information on safeguards and forest reference levels. Available online.
where they both operate. This section will provide an overview of both programmes and some key questions for communities to consider if they are asked to participate in either one.

**UN-REDD**

The UN-REDD Programme is a partnership between three UN agencies: the Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN (FAO), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP). UN-REDD was created in 2008 to help prepare developing countries to participate in the future REDD+ programme by building capacity to measure and reduce emissions from deforestation. It began with pilot projects to assist the governments of nine countries to prepare REDD+ strategies and establish emissions monitoring capacity with the support of key stakeholders. It will continue to support the sourcing of funds for these countries as they begin implementation of REDD+ strategies. The current plan is to eventually establish 20-40 pilot projects. UN-REDD is funded by voluntary contributions, with Norway as the largest contributor at this stage. While the politics are complicated, developing countries generally favour the UN-REDD programme as the UN allocates influence among countries more equitably than the World Bank, giving them greater say in the structure and implementation of the programme.

**Safeguards**

Relative to the World Bank, the UN-REDD Programme has strong safeguards for Indigenous peoples and local communities, at least on paper. It emphasizes obtaining free, prior and informed consent from communities for REDD+ activities and stresses the significance of full and effective participation in programme development and implementation. Countries that participate in UN-REDD must develop a set of safeguards for protecting rights. At this stage, however, it is unclear how effective these safeguards will actually be in practice. In pilot countries with little to no land tenure protection for Indigenous peoples (such as Democratic Republic of Congo), there are major questions about the potential robustness of safeguards in their strategies and in implementation. Many are encouraged, however, by the strong monitoring systems that are planned under UN-REDD.

**Payments**

While UN-REDD is funded through governments, it is currently testing multiple options for paying for activities that reduce emissions. At this stage, the focus is on preparing countries to have the capacity to accurately measure their emissions reductions and on ensuring counties have systems in place to efficiently and transparently manage funds.

With payment systems not yet in place and negotiations ongoing around the final REDD+ agreement, UN-REDD is not using a set system of measuring change against reference levels. It is, however, preparing participating countries to have the capacity to comply with whatever system of reference levels is finally agreed upon.
The World Bank’s REDD+ programming is divided into two components: the Forest Investment Programme (FIP) and the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF). It should be noted that the World Bank’s structure allocates influence to nations according to the size of their economies and has always had American directors; it is generally favoured by developed countries.

**Forest Investment Programme (FIP)**

The FIP seeks to positively influence developing countries’ forestry policies, leverage funding for REDD+, and fund pilot projects on REDD+ readiness and the effectiveness of improved policies and activities on deforestation.

**Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF)**

The FCPF is divided into two components: readiness and financing. In readiness, the FCPF is assisting countries to establish Readiness Mechanisms to measure REDD+ levels and ensure that national policies are appropriate for REDD+ programming. In financing, the FCPF is beginning to work on establishing a carbon market system.

**Safeguards**

It is important to recognize that while discussions are ongoing, both of the World Bank REDD+ programmes currently have weak provisions for Indigenous peoples. They merely require consultation and ‘broad support’, which are impossible to measure tangibly and fall far short of the obligations of Free, Prior and Informed Consent. The World Bank has also not yet been proactive in attempting to measure countries according to these requirements, which means that even the weak protections are
not ensured. In countries where both UN-REDD and the World Bank are implementing REDD+ programmes, they have agreed to jointly follow whichever standards are higher between them (which are generally UN-REDD’s stronger safeguards).

**SUMMARY**

REDD+ has potential for both positive and negative outcomes. This e-module provided an initial basis for understanding what REDD+ is, how it has emerged in international law and policy, and current options for financing. It also poses key questions and concerns for further discussion and highlights safeguards as an essential aspect of any REDD+ project. It is ultimately up to the community to take the time to carefully consider any proposed or potential REDD+ project, what impacts it may have, and how to engage with it in ways that could support local development plans and priorities.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**Other Relevant E-modules**

There are a number of other international frameworks that relate to REDD. If you are interested in learning more, please visit [www.community-protocols.org](http://www.community-protocols.org) for the following additional e-modules (some forthcoming):

- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Other International Human Rights Instruments, including ILO 169
- Traditional Knowledge and Customary Sustainable Use
- Farmers’ Rights

**Further Reading**

*What is REDD? A Guide for Indigenous Communities*

IWGIA et al., 2010
**Understanding Community-based REDD+: A Manual for Indigenous Communities**
IWGIA and AIPP, 2011

**Understanding Community-based REDD+: A Manual for Indigenous Community Trainers**
IWGIA and AIPP, 2011

**The Little REDD+ Book: A Guide to Governmental and Non-governmental Proposals for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation**
Amazon Conservation, 2008

**Tenure in REDD – Start-point or afterthought?**
Cotula and Mayers, 2009

**Free, Prior, and Informed Consent: Principles and Approaches for Policy and Project Development**
RECOFTC and GIZ, 2011

**Rights and REDD: Can They Be Matched?**
Lovera, 2010 (pages 40-47 in IUCN-CEESP Policy Matters 17)

**Evaluation and Verification of the Free, Prior and Informed Consent Process under the UN-REDD Programme in Lam Dong Province, Vietnam**
RECOFTC, 2010

**A Framework for Integrating Biodiversity Concerns into National REDD+ Programmes**
Gardner et al., 2011

**Acknowledgements**

This e-learning module was developed for the Regional Initiatives on Biocultural Community Protocols by Natural Justice: Lawyers for Communities and the Environment. We are grateful for the financial support of the CD Trust and Shuttleworth Foundation. All images and illustrations are courtesy of Natural Justice unless otherwise stated.

**Contact & Request for Feedback**

This e-learning module is part of a toolkit for community facilitators on biocultural community protocols. The complete toolkit, including additional e-learning modules, is available at: [www.community-protocols.org](http://www.community-protocols.org).

We welcome any and all feedback on the content and use of the e-learning modules and toolkit. If you have suggestions for improvement, would like more information, or would like to request a hard copy of the toolkit, please contact Holly Shrumm ([holly@naturaljustice.org](mailto:holly@naturaljustice.org)).

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