

Institutionalising Non Carbon Benefits - MRV

Project and objectives: Framed within the program of Euroclima+’s Forests, Biodiversity and ecosystem Component, the larger project, running from 2019-2021, aims to *institutionalize local non carbon benefits (NCBs) in national climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies*. More specifically this includes

1. The review, compilation and systematization of NCBs and their validation in both indigenous territories and peasant communities in pilot areas in Panama and Bolivia (the present study)
2. The development of a tool to monitor, report and verify (MRV) the NCBs and their importance to avoid deforestation - tried out and qualified at the local level in the pilot areas
3. Agreements with key national and international actors to concretize the commitment to incentivize NCB activities, applying the NCB MRV system.

The project builds on the facts that

1. the major parts of the opportunities to work with NCB activities in forests in developing countries are found in local communities and indigenous territories
2. the NCB concept is broad and still only little operationalized, especially in the context of local communities and indigenous territories
3. very little experience with defining, monitoring, reporting and verifying activities to maintain or develop NCBs in local communities and indigenous territories exist
4. there is no MRV system at the community level that is appropriate to the socio-cultural context of communities and indigenous territories, and which also recognizes the community activities that sustainably manage NCBs

Next phase regards the development of a tool for MRV for the protection and proper use of NCBs. Some basic requirements have already been identified: Downward accountability, community involvement, and a fairer dialogue between different knowledge systems. Ten existing MRV systems have been found that will inspire the NCB tool, among these The Indigenous Navigator, The UNESCO Culture for Development Indicators and a compilation of FSC standards, procedures and guidelines. This we will explore in indigenous peoples’ territories and communal lands in Bolivia and Panama the coming two years.

The project is implemented by the organisations Forests of the World, Apoyo Para el Campesino-Indígena del Oriente Boliviano (APCOB), the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) international and Geoversity Foundation, Panama.

The full report ‘Defining non carbon benefits,’ can be accessed here

Link to report (English):

<https://qrco.de/bbLN0t>

Link to our website (English):

<https://www.forestsoftheworld.org/>

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Non Carbon Benefits - Relevance

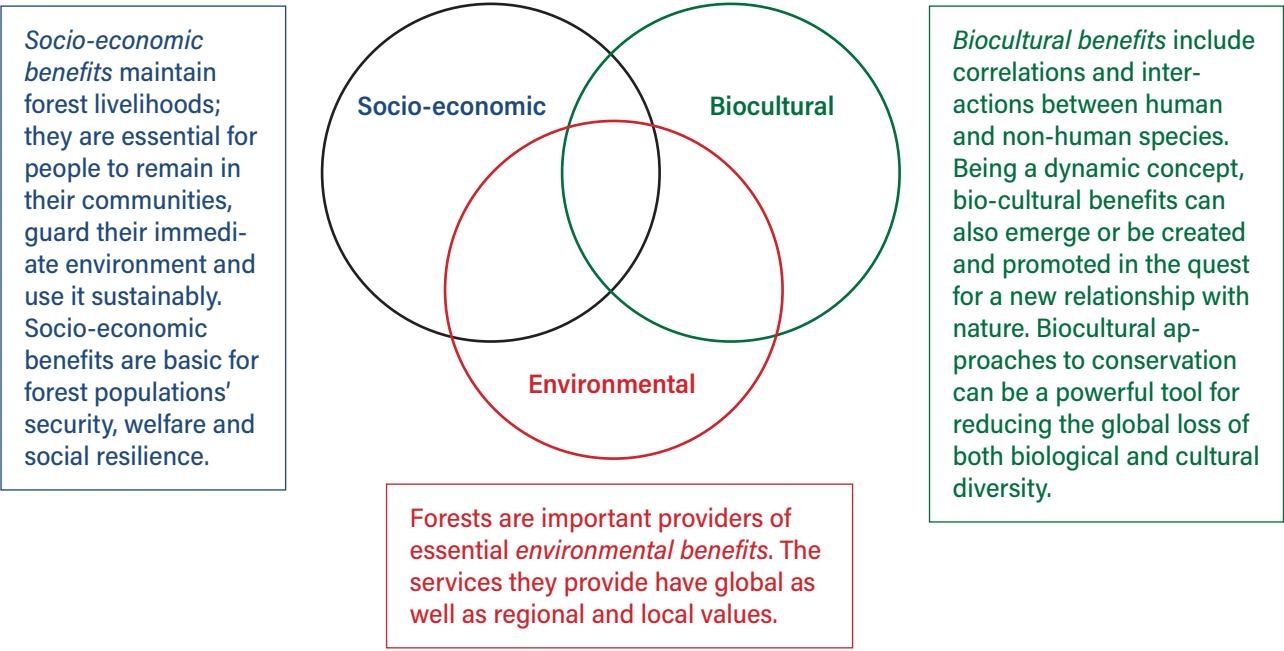
International funds and institutions seek stable and long term sustainable climate change mitigation investments. Our project addresses the increasing interest in defining mechanisms and methodologies to identify and prioritize non carbon benefits (NCBs), involving civil society and in particular the managers of forest resources, for more ambitious investments in mitigation and adaptation measures.

Participation in climate change adaptation and mitigation programs and projects is unlikely to be motivated by the potential to ‘farm carbon,’ but rather by benefits such as improved livelihoods, clean water, secure tenure, a better and more secure local economy, food security or new skills and technologies – non carbon benefits!

Yet ‘non carbon benefits’ is a broad and sparsely operationalized concept, especially in the context of indigenous territories and local communities, despite the fact that in developing countries, this is where most of the benefits exist.

We initially collected and systematized knowledge and experience of NCB activities and related issues. From the results we divided the activities into three types of benefits that they either maintain, enhance or generate.

Benefits



Governance is an integral part of all activities that maintain, enhance or generate NCBs. Multiple actors, including national, subnational, territorial and local governments, multilateral institutions, scientists, business, NGOs and trade certification bodies have roles to play in ensuring successful outcomes and constitute governance arrangements.

More than design and policies, however, governance is about power, relationships and accountability. Who has the influence, who makes decisions and how are decision-makers held accountable?

Non Carbon Benefits - Applicability

The project concentrates on rural area activities, primarily relating to forest regions and eco-systems.

Investments in initiatives that maintain, enhance or generate NCBs will benefit states, additionally achieving carbon benefits through sustainable forest mitigation investments, while indigenous peoples and local communities will benefit directly through improved and secure livelihoods in healthy environments.

To move forward, however, there is a pressing need for a clearer definition of the concept, and the development of tools to monitor, report and verify (MRV) non carbon benefits activities.



The importance of indigenous peoples' lands to ecosystem stability

Forests/ecosystems inhabited by indigenous and other forest-dwelling peoples with clear tenure rights coincide with high levels of biodiversity and experience less deforestation and degradation than other areas. Basic reasons for this have been found to relate to: 1) origin of the people, ancestral lands; 2) future generation heritage; 3) spirituality and communal conservation areas. Activities that maintain or create NCB's enhance resilience of indigenous peoples and the ecosystems they depend on. Governance and ability (means and power) to access political decision-making and markets are essential prerequisites for the stability of forest generated benefits.

Defining Non Carbon Benefits

Based on the review of literature and data-collection in the field, we suggest the following definition of the concept. Our definition includes three important principles/ideas. Our interest is to maintain or create NCBs; the definition is thus that **Non Carbon benefits** are

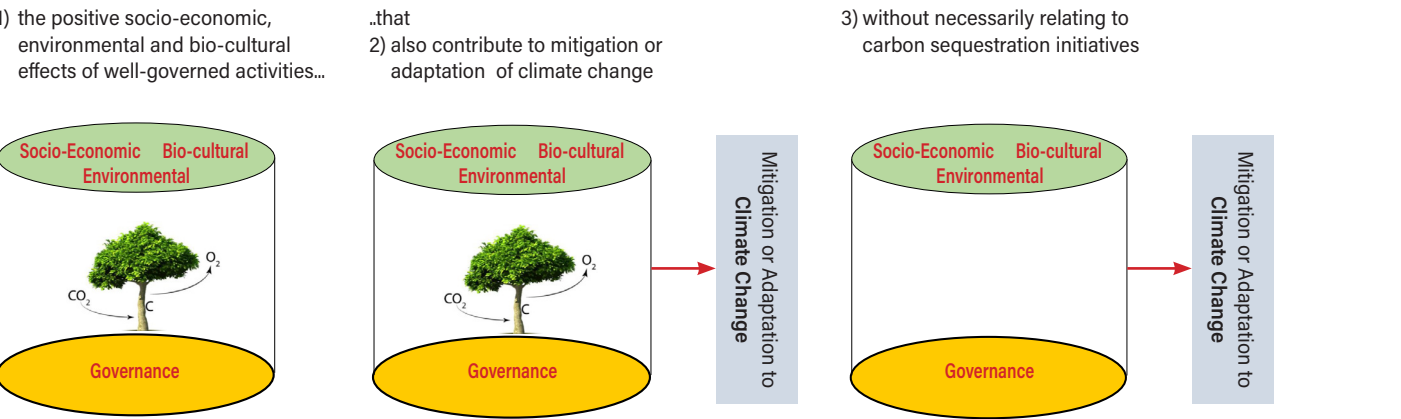


Figure above: Model of our definition and operationalisation of the concept Non Carbon Benefits

Different from Safeguards and Co-Benefits

The last point is what distinguishes non carbon benefits from safeguards and co-benefits; NCB's can be promoted outside of the immediate purpose of carbon sequestration. Even when an activity includes the purpose of carbon sequestration, the logic is reversed in that it is recognized that the NCBs are critical to both the legitimacy and effectiveness of carbon initiatives. NCBs are therefore better viewed as prerequisites than as benefits to be safeguarded. Moreover, governance is included as an inseparable part of the concept. NCBs can still be regarded as closely related to safeguards and co-benefits. The elements they concern, and their substance, are largely identical.

Listing essential non carbon benefits:

Socio-economic benefits	Environmental benefits	Bio-cultural benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultivation systems: Food security, agrobiodiversity and dietary choices Income generating forest activities Sustainable forest management Payments for ecosystem and research services Empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biodiversity and natural forest production and conservation Water: systems, supply and retention Combating land degradation and desertification Damage mitigation Recreation and landscape aesthetics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relational and reciprocal nature perception Sacred natural sites and species Knowledge and practices Intergenerational knowledge transfer Bio-cultural institutions Food sovereignty
Governance of non carbon benefits includes Indigenous peoples' land and resource governance; Community based forestry; Protected Area governance; Intergovernmental/international governance; National level governance		