

A Pro-poor and People-centered Response to Climate Change

Consultation, Washington, DC, May 27, 2008

Amazon Alliance

Contact Trevor Stevenson, Juanita Cabrera-Lopez
www.amazonalliance.org

Work relates to Adaptation x Mitigation x

1. What is your organization doing to advance pro-poor and people-centered climate change?

The Amazon Alliance works to ensure that indigenous peoples have voice and power in the processes that affect them. Our Steering Council, which includes the maximum elected indigenous leaders from each of the nine Amazonian countries, has determined that the negotiations around climate change have excluded legitimate indigenous leaders and other diverse perspectives. Studies also show the extreme importance of the Amazon rainforest to the global climate, while predictions for the future of the Amazon in the face of climate change are severe.

For now, the work of the Amazon Alliance is focused on three critical areas of climate change:

1. Ensuring that indigenous leaders are included in climate change negotiations, and that they and the people they represent are well-informed on climate change issues.
2. Demonstrating the importance of the Amazon to world climate stability
3. Exposing the role that infrastructure and deforestation can accelerate local climate change in the Amazon

2. What is, in your view, the most critical gap or unaddressed issue in the international negotiations towards a pro-poor climate regime?

Perhaps the most important point to be made here is that the “poor” are more than just victims of climate change. In the case of forest-dwelling peoples, they are in fact the owners of the forests which protect the world against dramatic climate change. Indigenous peoples, in particular, are the protectors of a huge percentage of the world’s tropical forests. They must be included in international negotiations not just as victims of climate change, nor only as stakeholders, but as key actors that hold the key to preventing further climate change and can provide alternative models for adaptation.

3. Do you plan to address this issue? If yes, how?

The Amazon Alliance is working to address this point by working with indigenous organizations to strengthen their representation in international negotiations, such as the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the COP9, and the IUCN Congress, among others. We are also working to promote interest among academics and scientists in exploring the particular role of the Amazon rainforest, and to produce integrated climate models that take into account the expected deforestation from planned infrastructure developments in the region.

4. What are the challenges you see in addressing this gap?

Perhaps the most significant challenge is that the general public is unaware of the important role indigenous peoples play in protecting forests and thus in preventing further climate change.

Governments and some NGOs exploit this lack of awareness in order to take center stage in negotiations over lands that do not belong to them. With the advent of REDD and Carbon trading, powerful economic interests are working to ensure that indigenous peoples are silenced until negotiations over their forests are complete.