



Beyond Carbon Credits:

A BLUEPRINT FOR HIGH-QUALITY INTERVENTIONS THAT WORK FOR PEOPLE, NATURE AND CLIMATE

November 2021

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This document was prepared to provide analysis for consideration by interested stakeholders and to promote additional discussions. Given that this topic is in under development, this is a living document that we will continue to update.

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About WWF

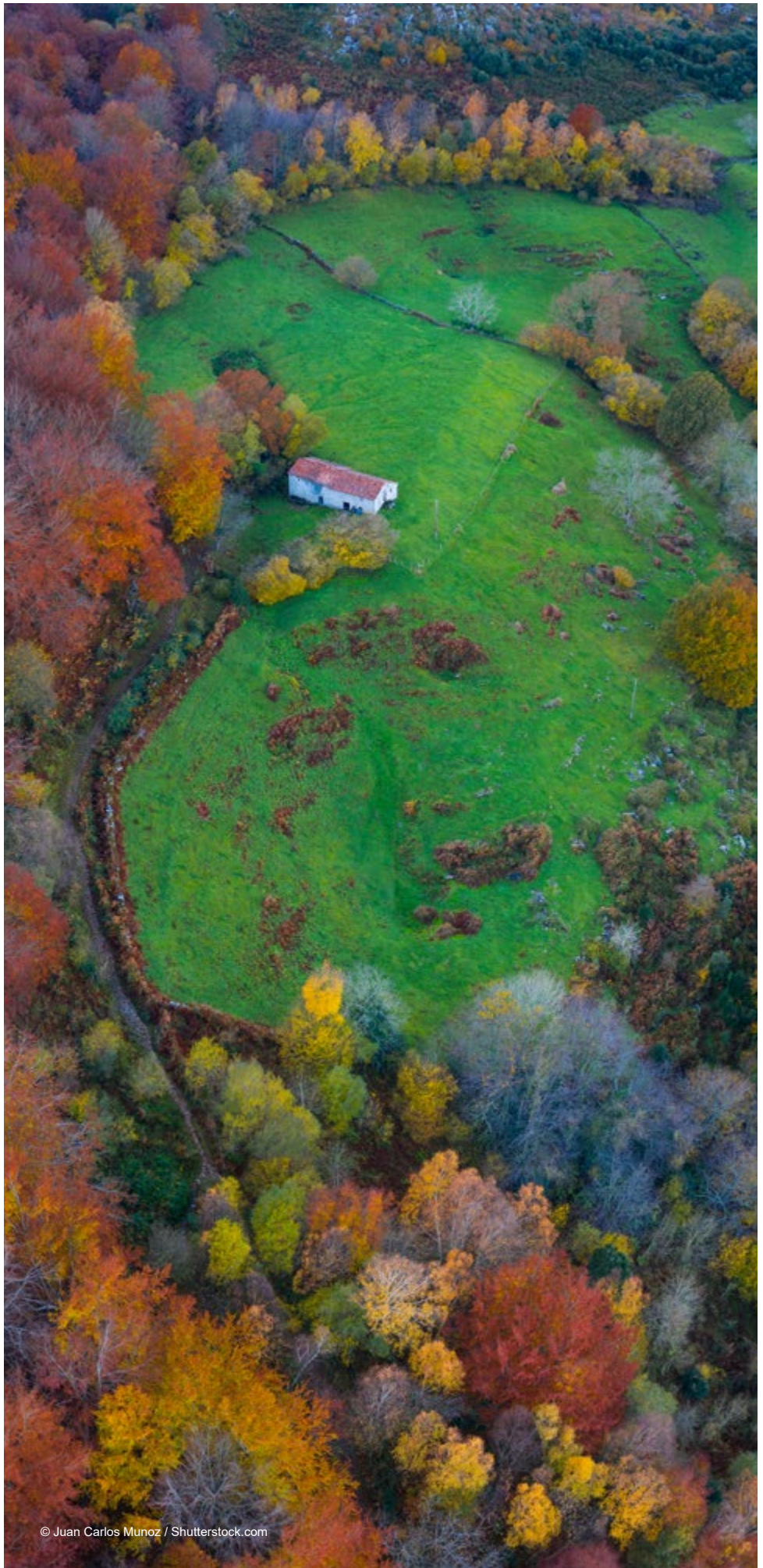
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FOREWORD

There is growing interest from both the public and private sectors to scale nature-based solutions to halt nature loss and address the climate crisis.

Over the past decade, approximately [US\\$20 billion in public finance](#) has been mobilized to reduce emissions from deforestation, and, as of January 2021, corporate actors have pledged [over US\\$4.1 billion](#) towards nature-based solutions. With the recent [Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use](#), leaders from developed and developing countries representing 85% of the world's forests committed to halt and reverse deforestation and land degradation by 2030. An accompanying economic package of almost US\$20 billion was designated from [public funds](#), [philanthropy](#), and [private actors](#).

The investment is urgently needed. Finance to implement nature-based solutions at needed scales will be essential to meet the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global warming and the objectives for climate, nature and people embedded in the Sustainable Development Goals.

But this increase in finance, while critical, must openly and adequately address the trade-offs between different financial sources and vehicles with nature stewardship. If interventions are poorly designed or governed, are overly constrained (e.g. to activities conducive to generating carbon credits), or fail to deliver meaningful benefits and incentives to people, they risk not only negative outcomes on the ground, but missed opportunities that we can no longer afford. Projects or programmes that underdeliver and/or overclaim results also undermine broader support for nature-based solutions as a means to address climate change and nature loss.

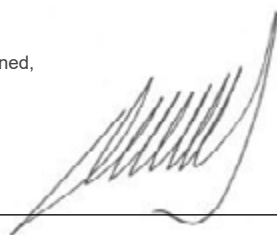
It is vital that this growing flow of capital is directed towards the highest quality interventions – those that protect nature and support people's livelihoods, while also mitigating and adapting to climate change. This includes securing the rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) and ensuring they benefit from any interventions in their territories. That means we need to be able to keenly differentiate opportunities to implement nature-based solutions with a view to delivering on those that meaningfully contribute to transformational impact.

This document sets out WWF's views on implementing high-impact and high-quality nature-based solutions for climate mitigation from the perspective of the people and the places where we work, as a companion to WWF's [Blueprint for Corporate Action on Climate and Nature](#), which focuses on business- or demand-side integrity. This document discusses how funders and companies can contribute to nature-based solutions as an integral part of their broader climate strategies.

Companies need not work alone. There are numerous crucial actors in this space – including public, private and civil society institutions – with which to form strategic partnerships. Many multilateral and bilateral initiatives can provide complementary finance and economies of scale; and key partners on the ground, including IPLCs, know the natural environment and are best positioned to ensure their resources are secured into the future. Multi-stakeholder participation is the best pathway to leverage investments for maximum impact and to ensure sustainability.

After decades of negotiations, commitments and relatively siloed strategies among sectors, the world stage has changed. With the Paris Agreement in place, jurisdictional and landscape sustainability initiatives advancing in a multitude of countries, and companies increasingly stepping up to lead with an understanding that business has core dependencies on nature and a liveable climate, the time is right to align state and non-state actors towards real systems change.

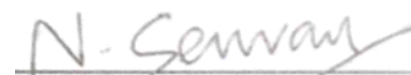
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INTRODUCTION

To prevent the most catastrophic impacts of climate change, the world needs to reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible, and no later than 2050.

This means reducing emissions to the greatest extent possible, and balancing any remaining emissions by removing an equivalent amount from the atmosphere. While the rapid decarbonization of sectors such as energy and transport is imperative, halting and reversing the loss of nature must also be part of the solution. Stopping deforestation, forest degradation and the conversion of other natural ecosystems is integral to meeting climate goals, while the restoration of forests and other ecosystems provides enormous opportunities to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Nature-based solutions for climate mitigation (which we refer to in this document as NbS for climate mitigation) also have enormous potential to simultaneously generate benefits for biodiversity and for human development.

The Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) creates a system for countries to create and meet increasingly ambitious climate commitments over time, in the form of nationally determined contributions (NDCs).

The Paris Agreement also formally recognizes the framework known as REDD+, which stands for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, as well as the sustainable management of forests and the conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries. REDD+ financially values the role of forests in mitigating climate change, including by offering results-based payments for actions that reduce or remove forest carbon emissions.

REDD+ is a framework for national-level, government-driven programmes that take place in countries with tropical forests, including mangroves.

REDD+ activities, as mitigation strategies, can be included in a country's NDC or used to generate tradeable mitigation outcomes in carbon markets. In addition to the UN framework, REDD+ activities have been implemented as individual projects in the voluntary carbon market. These projects currently account for the vast majority of forest-based carbon credits in the market, though jurisdictional REDD+ programmes are finally getting off the ground.

WWF welcomes the rapidly growing commitment to nature-based climate solutions. It's essential, however, to ensure that NbS for climate mitigation interventions deliver real, meaningful and measurable benefits for people, nature and the climate, and do so increasingly at subnational to national scales, as envisioned in the Paris Agreement.

To ensure these benefits and to catalyse change, WWF believes in evaluating the underlying drivers at scale and designing interventions, policies and incentives that collectively can change the underlying conditions in the direction of sustainability. This means developing an overarching strategy, such as a low emissions development plan, and then crowding in diverse investments and scalable interventions to support it. A particular initiative may start, for example, by introducing improved production

practices to growers, evolve to provide voluntary incentives for broader uptake of these practices, achieve sustainability with the realization of benefits from improved productivity, and then be codified in land use regulation. And this type of building and scaling is more feasible when we break silos and configure private sector and market interventions in ways that catalyze and complement improved governance.

WWF also believes this type of change is achieved by maintaining a strong sense of place and putting people and communities at the centre of every step from ideation to implementation. Crucially, NbS for climate mitigation must be designed and implemented in partnership with and to the benefit of IPLCs, and must build in social and environmental safeguards to provide clear benefits to diverse constituencies.

Achieving these lofty principles is the challenge on the ground, in complex, real-world circumstances and with powerful economic drivers at play, which is why WWF approaches NbS for climate mitigation with people and systems change as our compass. There are diverse opportunities for funders who want to support NbS for climate mitigation – whether corporates, governments, foundations or impact investors – but they vary widely in terms of scale and impact potential, so due diligence by funders is broadly warranted, in particular to ensure transparency, inclusivity, and credibility of expected outcomes and metrics. In this guide, we provide a set of elements and considerations to help practitioners, policy-makers, funders and investors to identify high-quality interventions that are measurable, credible and impactful.



This guide focuses on forests, including mangroves. However, many of the same considerations can also apply to NbS for climate mitigation deriving from other ecosystems, such as marine ecosystems, grasslands and agricultural lands.



Nature-based solutions address societal challenges effectively and adaptively through actions to protect, sustainably manage and restore natural or modified ecosystems, while simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits¹.

Nature-based solutions for climate change² harness the power of nature to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and also help us adapt to the impacts of climate change. They involve protecting, restoring and sustainably managing ecosystems to address society's challenges and promote human well-being while also managing anticipated climate risks to nature.

Nature-based solutions for climate mitigation (NbS for climate mitigation) deliver positive climate mitigation impacts and manage anticipated climate risks, while equally delivering on human well-being and biodiversity benefits. NbS for climate mitigation must be supported by diverse sources of finance, partnerships and initiatives, and a smaller subset of these might involve the creation of carbon credits.

1 Based on the definition by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). For more information, please see <https://www.iucn.org/theme/nature-based-solutions/about>

2 For more on WWF's approach to NbS for climate change, please see WWF Brief: [Nature-based Solutions for Climate Change](#).



THE BLUEPRINT FOR DEVELOPING HIGH-QUALITY INTERVENTIONS

Any funders interested in investing in NbS for climate mitigation should follow the mitigation hierarchy by prioritizing internal emissions reductions first. WWF's [*Blueprint for Corporate Action on Climate and Nature*](#) describes the process of setting and implementing science-based targets that are compatible with limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C before moving to investing a financial commitment for climate and nature impact. Once such a strategy is developed and under way, a funder can turn to nature-based investments and can use the following blueprint to guide their search for high-quality interventions.

In the rapidly changing environment of claims, standards, credits, and national and international commitments to mitigate the effects of climate change, there is a need for clarity and guidance. There is burgeoning interest from corporate partners and funders wanting to invest in NbS for climate mitigation with knowledgeable actors on the ground, but there are also concerns about the risks associated with undifferentiated demand.

In response we've drafted a series of guidelines for funders and investors. Following these guidelines in the design and implementation of interventions will ensure integrity, high quality and transparency, and enable equitable consideration of people, nature and climate.

Blueprint for Developing Nature-based Solutions for Climate Mitigation



NbS FOR CLIMATE MITIGATION MUST DELIVER FOR PEOPLE, NATURE AND CLIMATE

By design, NbS for climate mitigation interventions seek to address three intertwined global crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and inequitable development.



SCALE MATTERS

NbS for climate mitigation should be implemented at significant scale, or clearly support an integrated landscape or jurisdictional strategy or programme.



PRIORITIZE LANDSCAPE NEEDS, NOT TRADABLE CREDITS

NbS for climate mitigation interventions should focus on supporting activities that deliver measurable human development, biodiversity and climate benefits.



INTERVENTIONS ARE TRANSPARENT, CREDIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE

Funders should seek out best-in-class NbS for climate mitigation that ensure quality, transparency, and equitable benefit-sharing.



NBS FOR CLIMATE MITIGATION MUST DELIVER FOR PEOPLE, NATURE AND CLIMATE

NbS for climate mitigation interventions seek to address the three intertwined global crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and inequitable development. They simultaneously prioritize the improvement of livelihoods and human well-being, the protection and enhancement of nature, and the generation of carbon reductions or removals – and the solutions will only be effective and sustainable in the long term if the three are addressed together. NbS for climate mitigation interventions must build broad, multi-stakeholder support, with inclusive consultation from the design stage through to implementation and action.

1. Design for multiple benefits

In order to produce transformational change that is sustainable in the long term, NbS for climate mitigation should prioritize outcomes for people, nature and climate by delivering measurable benefits linked to sustainable community development, restoring biodiversity and ecosystem services, reducing or removing greenhouse gas emissions, and supporting adaptation and resilience.

2. Involve local communities

Communities should be involved in the design, development and implementation of interventions and have a say in decision-making processes. This includes effective engagement of Indigenous peoples and other forest-dependent communities in any activity undertaken in their territories with their free, prior and informed consent (FPIC). As primary stakeholders in the landscape, communities will play a key role in ensuring the sustainability of interventions, and must be supported to enable their full participation.

Local communities, and especially women and youth, must fairly share in the benefits of NbS for climate mitigation interventions. Any revenues generated should in large part be directed and/or reinvested in local communities, with a focus on alternative livelihoods. Revenue may also be used to provide technical support to project activities.

3. Institute environmental and social safeguards

NbS for climate mitigation often involve complex environmental and social issues, including land ownership and carbon rights. All such interventions must promote and support the [Cancun Safeguards](#). These include ensuring “[that] actions complement or are consistent with the objectives of national forest programmes and relevant international conventions and agreements” and supporting “transparent and effective national forest governance structures, taking into account national legislation and sovereignty”.

4. Focus on preventing nature loss

Preventing deforestation, forest degradation and ecosystem conversion delivers the most urgent and immediate climate benefits in the context of climate-related land use, along with other positive environmental and social impacts. NbS for climate mitigation efforts should be focused in areas where rates of deforestation and conversion are currently highest ([deforestation fronts](#)).

While prioritizing certain actions over others is always context-specific, generally funders should prioritize support to NbS for climate mitigation related to forests in the following order: i) reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD); ii) improved forest management (IFM); and iii) afforestation, reforestation and restoration (ARR). Restoration activities should consistently be planned in an integrated landscape context, but would likely be an inappropriate focus in geographies facing continued high deforestation or conversion.



SCALE MATTERS

NbS for climate mitigation should be implemented at significant scale, or clearly support an integrated landscape or jurisdictional strategy or programme. Smaller, standalone projects should only be developed in cases where a landscape or jurisdictional strategy does not yet exist, and if they can deliver exceptional benefits for communities and nature. In these cases, stakeholders should seek opportunities to concurrently advance a broader NbS for climate mitigation strategy within the jurisdiction.

1. Prioritize landscape-scale activities

Interventions at scale, such as landscape and jurisdictional approaches, are better able to address the underlying drivers of deforestation and nature loss, to build institutional and technical capacity, and to improve long-term sustainability than standalone or smaller-scale projects. This is due to several key features of these approaches:

- **Coverage:** activities are typically developed and implemented at the scale of a subnational or national government, focusing on the performance of the entire landscape and considering multiple land uses. This can help address underlying drivers of deforestation and reduce risks such as non-additionality and leakage.
- **Stakeholder buy-in:** government and all stakeholders, such as farmers and IPLCs, have opportunities to participate throughout the process (ideation, design, implementation); a multi-stakeholder platform is usually needed to set shared goals, align activities, and harmonize monitoring and verification.
- **Government involvement:** addressing the underlying policy and institutional failures that drive deforestation usually requires governments to act. This may include enhanced law enforcement, reforming regulatory and fiscal policies, addressing illegal logging and encroachment, or recognition of Indigenous territorial rights. While consistent government leadership is not always feasible, a jurisdictional approach that brings government to the table helps work towards the necessary policy reform and implementation to usher in transformational change.

New interventions should identify and build upon existing efforts in the region. Ideally, these should link to national or subnational policies, goals and programmes, such as

NDCs, REDD+ and low-carbon development plans. While landscape-scale or jurisdictional approaches should be prioritized, project-scale activities can make positive mitigation contributions if properly nested³ in jurisdictional REDD+ programmes. Smaller standalone projects can also be worthwhile if these have significant community and nature benefits, or if they contribute to the development of jurisdictional programmes.

2. Align with national strategies and accounting systems

Government participation is key when developing NbS for climate mitigation at scale. Funders, government and other actors should therefore collaborate and align on intervention goals in a way that does not undermine national plans and strategies.

Project developers should engage with governments to ensure alignment of their interventions with the Paris Agreement. Wherever possible, investments should be channeled toward interventions that are coordinated with governments and are consistent with national carbon accounting systems. Jurisdictional or landscape approaches to zero deforestation/conversion that align with national REDD+ strategies, for example, can leverage corporate finance, technical partnerships and/or market signals to achieve results and can help countries increase the ambition of their conditional NDCs.

New projects need to be embedded into a national system using a country's established forest reference emission level (FREL/FRL), and be methodologically consistent with the national baseline. If there is no national FREL/FRL, a subnational FREL/FRL can be used in the interim where available. If no FREL/FRL exists, at minimum projects must use a methodological approach consistent with national data and with national monitoring and reporting efforts.

³ Proper nesting approaches are still being discussed and elaborated and no universal framework has been adopted within the UNFCCC or elsewhere. For more information about nesting, please see the following publications: UN-REDD Nesting: Reconciling REDD+ at Multiple Scales, An Asia-Pacific Perspective, Winrock/South Pole/VCS Guidance Document: Options for Nesting REDD+ Projects, ART TREES Nesting under ART or The World Bank Nesting of REDD+ Initiatives: Manual for Policymakers.



PRIORITIZE LANDSCAPE NEEDS, NOT TRADABLE CREDITS

NbS for climate mitigation interventions should focus on supporting activities that deliver measurable human development, biodiversity and climate benefits. NbS for climate mitigation should unlock climate finance for landscape-scale interventions that have significant climate mitigation potential, while pioneering new approaches and methodologies. While transparent and measurable climate benefits are a priority, interventions should not be narrowly designed or focused on generating carbon credits.

1. Focus on landscape finance

Funders have an active role to play in developing and scaling NbS for climate mitigation by investing in interventions that will have transformational impact. This type of landscape finance can support many forms of NbS for climate mitigation, only some of which would likely be conducive to generating carbon credits. NbS for climate mitigation interventions should focus on supporting activities that deliver measurable human development, biodiversity and carbon benefits without generating carbon credits. These might include, for example, incentivizing conversion-free agricultural activities, developing alternative livelihood

pathways, creating connectivity corridors for wildlife, and mapping and titling Indigenous lands, to name a few.

With any NbS for climate mitigation intervention, partners should perform a cost-benefit assessment to determine whether carbon reductions or removals that result from the activities should generate carbon credits. Accreditation under a carbon crediting programme carries additional costs and is not a failsafe path to credibility so choosing a fully transparent non-accreditation pathway that still measures and quantifies climate benefits can mean more investment goes directly into conservation, restoration and community development. Where credits are generated, we recommend that they are immediately retired to a predetermined and vetted buyer.⁴



⁴ Any buyer should follow the mitigation hierarchy by setting a science-based target for reducing their own greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C before funding NbS for climate mitigation interventions outside their own supply chain.

2. Test, learn, adapt and share knowledge

NbS for climate mitigation at an effective scale are a learning-by-doing process, and practices may need to be updated over time. It's important to test approaches, monitor what works, be adaptable, and share knowledge and learnings with others. Important areas for learning include methods to monitor and measure forest carbon, to deliver carbon finance benefits to IPLCs, and to build local capacity.

3. If generating credits, support transition to jurisdictional scale

If funders still choose to channel some investments into forest-related NbS for climate mitigation that generate carbon credits at this point in time, a higher level of due diligence is required. WWF suggests that they prioritize funding in the following order:

a. From jurisdictional REDD+ programmes.

Jurisdictional REDD+ crediting is distinct from standalone project-based crediting because it is coordinated by a national or subnational jurisdiction which should have in place comprehensive monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) requirements to quantify emissions reductions at a national or jurisdictional scale. This coordinated large-scale approach has advantages over individual projects in addressing drivers of land-use change at scale. Likewise, the sector-wide monitoring system has advantages in capturing and addressing leakage of emissions. Crediting from jurisdictional REDD+ activities may come from individual projects that have been integrated into the jurisdictional programme; for such situations, additional due diligence is required to confirm that such projects have been properly integrated (see below).

b. From individual projects that have been integrated (or “nested”) into jurisdictional REDD+ programmes, where they meet certain criteria.

Jurisdictional REDD+ programmes have been slow to emerge, and in their absence many individual forest crediting projects have been developed under voluntary standards, with variable levels of integration with regional or jurisdictional policies and strategies. These standalone projects should make credible efforts to integrate within their host countries' jurisdictional REDD+ programmes if and as these become established and fully operational. However, integrating projects into jurisdictional programmes has proven difficult,

and inadequate nesting can undermine the advantages that jurisdictional programmes have over standalone projects. For this reason, WWF recommends that funders limit their support of projects to those that:

- i) Have a reference level and a MRV system that is aligned with an approved subnational or national reference level and MRV system.
- ii) Are consistent with national accounting systems; i.e. they account for the issuance and transfer of credits in the national registry or an accounting system recognized in the country in which the emissions removals are taking place (e.g. approved registries outside of the country, such as those provided by independent voluntary standards programmes).
- iii) Are consistent with subnational and national strategies to reduce emissions in the forest sector (i.e. a country's NDC, the country's national plan for REDD+, and other national-level policies).
- iv) Have an equitable benefit-sharing arrangement between the project owner, local population and the government, prepared as part of a consultative, transparent and participatory process that reflects input from stakeholders, including support from affected communities and Indigenous peoples. Allocation terms of nested project funds and/or benefits should also be reflected in the jurisdiction-level benefit-sharing plan to ensure alignment.

Integrating projects into subnational and national-level programmes is a learning-by-doing process with no one-size-fits-all solution. Buyers should perform their own due diligence to assess whether a nested project meets these criteria.

c. From standalone (not integrated) forest projects where the project meets certain criteria.

In many countries that could most benefit from carbon financing, jurisdictional frameworks are not yet in place; until these are established, other means of finance might be more suitable. Funders should support high-quality, standalone project-based REDD+ crediting only where:

- i) The project is located in a host country where no jurisdictional REDD+ programme has been established.
- ii) The project developer plans to integrate with any future jurisdictional REDD+ programme in a manner consistent with the above criteria, and has used a methodological approach consistent with national data and MRV systems in the host country.



NBS FOR CLIMATE MITIGATION ARE TRANSPARENT, CREDIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE

Funders should seek out best-in-class NbS for climate mitigation that ensure quality, transparency, and equitable benefit-sharing. Any claims made about investments in these interventions must be credible, supported by transparent data and analysis, and agreed to by nature stewards on the ground. Intervention design should focus on sustainability and permanence, and result in stakeholder ownership of ongoing monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

1. Ensure complete transparency

NbS for climate mitigation interventions must be transparent about project income and how funds are allocated via annual reporting to donors, corporate partners and/or government agencies. Governments should be supported to set up transparent processes, with memoranda covering revenue use – preferably ensuring funds are reinvested in climate and community projects.

2. Avoid conflicts of interest

Conflicts of interest, real or perceived, are inherent for many carbon market participants. The crediting standards receive revenue from issuing carbon credits. Auditors are paid by the developers of the projects they are hired to audit. Project developers produce data for auditors and standards and have an incentive to identify data or scenarios that show the greatest emissions reductions. It's important to proactively identify and mitigate any potential conflicts of interest.

3. Analyse and mitigate risks

Risk analysis and mitigation is an integral part of intervention planning and implementation. Risks to consider include:

- a. Community consultation and land tenure issues.** Carbon interventions and activities may restrict or otherwise alter communities' access to and use of resources. This risk is especially relevant where land tenure conflicts or ambiguity already exist. Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) must be a minimum requirement for all interventions.
- b. Inequitable benefit-sharing.** Centralized project ownership or overly centralized authority in the case of a jurisdictional programme presents a risk that the goods, services or other benefits – including potential carbon revenues generated by the project – may not be shared equitably among affected stakeholders and local communities.

- c. Inflated baselines.** A baseline represents the level of performance that the project must outperform to claim a mitigation outcome. Baseline-setting is difficult for REDD+ activities because it often entails uncertain future scenarios, such as the level of future deforestation projected to occur in the project's absence. Overestimating future projected deforestation (or recent deforestation) risks over-crediting the project, undermining its integrity. To avoid inflation, baselines should be set based on historical averages (avoiding using any outliers as reference years) and conservative future projections that take account of local circumstances and expected changes.

- d. Leakage.** Leakage can occur when climate mitigation activities in one area cause emissions elsewhere. For example, a carbon project that displaces loggers or farmers will have limited impact on net CO₂ levels if these emissions occur beyond the boundaries of the project area. Interventions should account conservatively for leakage in their estimates of emissions reductions or removals. Increasing the scale of mitigation activities (directly targeting drivers) and accounting can help reduce these risks but does not eliminate them.

- e. Non-permanence.** NbS for climate mitigation activities seek to increase and/or protect carbon stocks, but there is a risk of this carbon being released back into the atmosphere, for example due to forest fires or project mismanagement. Interventions must mitigate this risk by setting aside emissions reductions or removals in a pooled buffer reserve, or applying a discount rate to them to preserve the integrity of the intervention, including the integrity of any carbon credits issued.⁵

- f. Additionality.** To be credible, NbS for climate mitigation activities that generate carbon credits must be additional – that is, the emissions reductions they generate wouldn't have occurred without the added incentives arising from carbon finance. This can be hard to show in the case of REDD+ projects and programmes, where crediting is often based on performing better than historical emissions levels.

⁵ For more information about addressing non-permanence, consult the Carbon Credit Quality Initiative's methodology

To increase the likelihood of additionality, baselines must be conservative and the activities should clearly go beyond business-as-usual measures to address drivers.

4. Focus on sustainability and permanence

Funders should ensure NbS for climate mitigation have a mechanism to ensure financial and technical self-sufficiency and sustainability, using climate finance or other revenue, and partners should work with communities to transfer skills for long-term management of interventions.

5. Ensure credit quality

When carbon credits are generated from NbS for climate mitigation, estimates of the amount of carbon the intervention will sequester must be robust and conservative. To mitigate the risk of the intervention not capturing or saving the expected amount of carbon, a significant proportion of non-tradable credits should be set aside in a buffer pool.⁶

Where tradable credits are generated, these should be of the highest quality, based on transparent and robust calculations, and certified by meeting or exceeding credible standards with targeted due diligence as previously described, ideally measuring carbon, biodiversity and community benefits. Credits should be assigned to an identified funding partner or sold to a predetermined buyer and immediately retired. Benefits, financial and otherwise, that accrue to local communities must be clearly identified.

6. Use robust, high-quality standards

Various carbon quantification methodologies and standards have been developed for crediting carbon projects and jurisdictional REDD+ programmes, setting requirements in areas such as quantifying carbon removals and MRV. REDD+ carbon quantification methodologies/standards include Architecture for REDD+ Transactions (ART)'s The REDD+ Environmental Excellence Standard (TREES), Verra's Jurisdictional Nested REDD+ (JNR) standard, and the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility's (FCPF) methodology. Project-level carbon quantification methodologies are maintained by carbon crediting programmes such as the Gold Standard, Plan Vivo and Verified Carbon Standard (VCS).

WWF does not endorse any particular standard, and most are frequently updated. Even though standards have procedures in place for ensuring credit quality, there are still risks of discrepancies, e.g. between the standard, the project or programme's implementation, and verification and validation of results. Funders of interventions that use the standards should perform their own due diligence to ensure they meet high levels of quality in community consultation, equitable benefit-sharing, robust baselines, leakage prevention, non-permanence prevention and additionality.

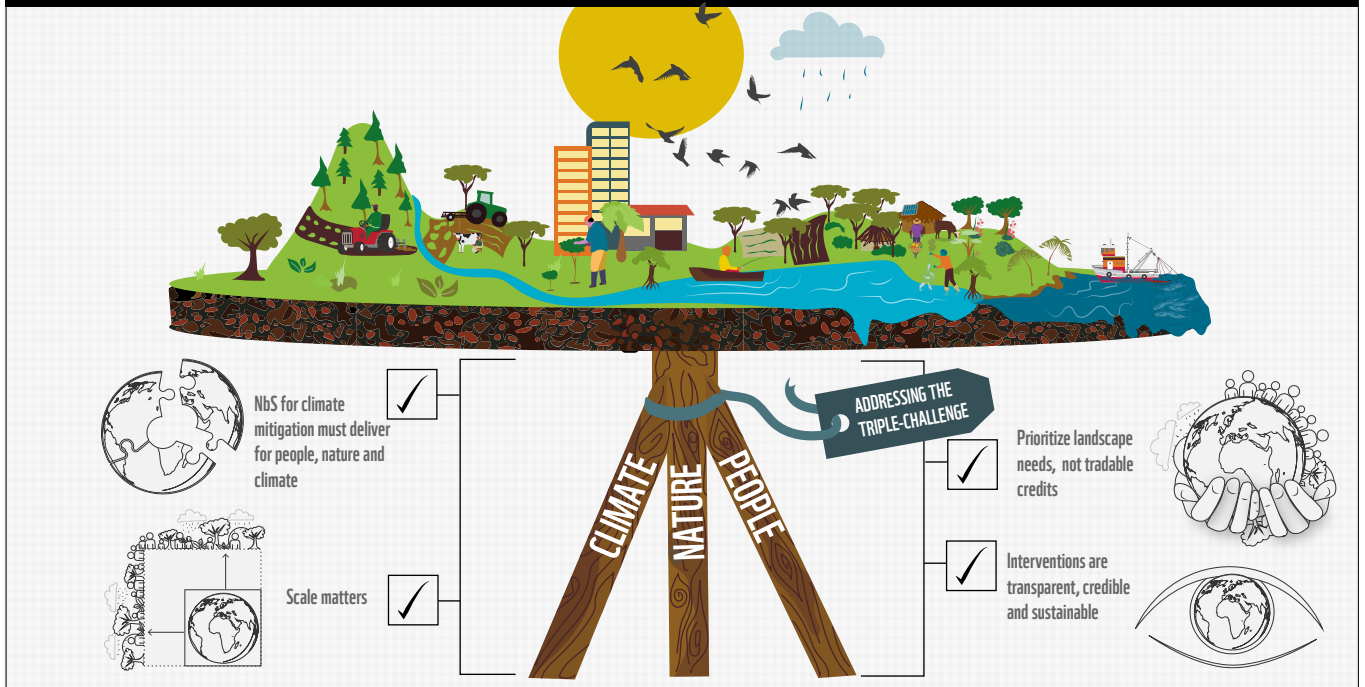
7. Ensure public claims are credible

Any public claims made about the climate, biodiversity, livelihoods or other benefits of NbS for climate mitigation must be credible and verifiable. Claims made by any partners should be clearly communicated to all stakeholders, including beneficiaries, before any publicity or public announcement.



6 For more information about the size and diversification of buffer pools, consult the Carbon Credit Quality Initiative's methodology

Nature-based Solutions for Climate Mitigation



NEXT STEPS

EXPLORE the options for landscape-scale NbS for climate mitigation

We encourage funders to dig deeper into the guidance summarized in this document and determine how it aligns with their corporate climate mitigation strategies. Any funders interested in investing in NbS for climate mitigation should follow the mitigation hierarchy by prioritizing internal emissions reductions first (see WWF's [Blueprint for Corporate Action on Climate and Nature](#)). Given the scope of possible NbS for climate mitigation interventions, funders could choose to focus on those elements they believe are priorities for their corporate strategy, whether these might be to support national governments in developing jurisdictional standards, to mitigate the effects of climate change in a specific area of the world, or to concentrate on interventions with higher biodiversity or human development benefits.

COLLABORATE with partners implementing NbS for climate mitigation on the ground worldwide

There are many dedicated partners implementing NbS for climate mitigation. By defining the elements of high-quality, transparent and credible interventions, funders can choose partners on the ground who will adhere to the highest standards of design and implementation, ensuring environmental and social safeguards are a priority. Implementing partners, including WWF, can provide further information and guidance on the most impactful actions to take.

INVEST in NbS for climate mitigation that promote people, nature and climate as equal beneficiaries

To produce impact at the scale required to meet global objectives, unprecedented, deliberate and targeted investment is needed. The highest-quality interventions, that ensure that people, nature and climate share equally in the benefits, should be prioritized in investment portfolios.

DEFINITIONS

Afforestation, reforestation and restoration (ARR):

A category of REDD+ activities that increases carbon stocks through afforestation, reforestation and restoration (see definitions for each respective activity).

Afforestation: Direct human-induced conversion of land that has not been forested for a period of at least 50 years to forested land through planting, seeding and/or the human-induced promotion of natural seed sources.

Benefit-sharing: Intentional transfer of monetary and non-monetary incentives (goods, services or other benefits) to stakeholders for the generation of environmental results (such as greenhouse gas emissions reductions) funded by revenues derived from those results.

Carbon credit: An emission unit that is issued by a carbon crediting programme and represents an emission reduction or removal of greenhouse gases. Carbon credits are uniquely serialized, issued, tracked and cancelled by means of an electronic registry.

Carbon quantification methodologies: Documents, sometimes established by an independent carbon crediting programme/standard, to quantify a project's net emission reductions or removals. These documents are often named by carbon crediting programmes/standards as baseline and monitoring methodologies, tools, protocols or methodological guidelines.

Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC): Principles of consultation and consent that together constitute a special standard that safeguards and functions as a means for the exercise of Indigenous peoples' substantive rights, such as the right to property and other rights that may be implicated in natural resource development.

Improved forest management (IFM): Forest management activities (e.g. reduced impact logging, lengthening rotation period, fire management, diversified species composition, increasing no-harvest areas or buffers) that result in increased carbon stocks within forests and/or reduce greenhouse gas emissions from forestry activities when compared to business-as-usual forestry practices.

Jurisdictional approach: With origins in REDD+ and landscape approaches, jurisdictional approaches seek to align governments, businesses, NGOs and other stakeholders around shared goals of conservation, supply chain sustainability and green economic development; jurisdictional approaches also focus on the political level at which land-use decisions are made and enforced.

Jurisdictional REDD+ programme: A programme administered by a jurisdiction (e.g. nation, state, province,

region) that establishes and operationalizes rules and requirements to enable accounting and crediting of REDD+ activities.

Landscape: A socioecological system that consists of natural and/or human-modified ecosystems, and which is influenced by distinct ecological, historical, economic and sociocultural processes and activities.

Mitigation hierarchy: Prioritized steps in natural resource management to deliver the best outcomes for people and nature. Companies should first reduce their emissions within and adjacent to their value chain, before compensating for remaining emissions. To benefit nature, companies should make sure their supply chains include no deforestation or land conversion, prior to investing in compensatory activities. Overall, we recommend that finance be directed toward interventions that reduce impact on climate and nature first, before investing in restoration.

Nested projects: REDD+ projects that have successfully integrated (i.e. nested) into a jurisdictional REDD+ programme through harmonized greenhouse gas accounting rules.

REDD+: REDD+ is a framework created by the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) to guide activities in the forest sector that reduces emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, as well as the sustainable management of forests and the conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries. Distinct from the implementation of REDD+ activities outside of the UNFCCC context.

REDD+ activities: Activities that include reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, conservation of carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests or enhancement of forest carbon stocks. Can include mangrove forests.

Reforestation: The direct human-induced conversion of non-forested land to forested land through planting, seeding and/or the promotion of natural seed sources on previously forested land that has been converted to other land uses.

Restoration (sometimes referenced as revegetation): A direct human-induced activity to increase carbon stocks of woody biomass on sites through the establishment of vegetation that covers a minimum area of 0.05 hectares and does not meet the definitions of afforestation or reforestation.

Safeguards: Measures to protect from or avoid risks ("do no harm") while promoting benefits ("do good").

Standalone projects: For the purposes of this document, REDD+ projects that have not nested into a REDD+ jurisdictional programme.



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