



P O L I C Y B R I E F

The Need to Monitor Indigenous Peoples' Access to the Green Climate Fund



Writer: Eileen Mairena Cunningham
Editors: Doris Borna Mae Esteban and
Helen Biangalen-Magata

With support from:



The Need to Monitor Indigenous Peoples' Access to the Green Climate Fund

Introduction

Climate finance and the commitments around it are important topics when discussing the current environmental crisis. Climate finance often generates a series of discussions and questions that can sometimes seem endless, complicated, and non-transparent. In the global financial architecture, there are specialized financing mechanisms. One such financial mechanism is the Green Climate Fund (GCF)¹.

The Green Climate Fund held its first Board meeting (B.01) in August 2012 and approved its first funding proposal three years later in November 2015, during the 11th Board meeting (B.11). This first funding proposal has a significant importance for Indigenous Peoples, as it established action in the Datem area of Peru, in Indigenous Peoples' territories and above all raised a series of questions related to the respect and recognition of the collective rights of Indigenous Peoples and especially the importance of conducting processes that integrate free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) in all climate actions to be carried out on indigenous lands and territories, as well as the importance of follow-up and monitoring of the Fund's actions.

This first GCF project set the tone for recognizing the importance of monitoring climate finance from the position of Indigenous Peoples as there is a lack of data that can tell us how many climate action projects are implemented on Indigenous lands and territories –more importantly, how these climate actions will impact Indigenous Peoples and how data obtained from climate finance monitoring are integrated into the said actions.

In February 2018, the GCF approved the Indigenous Peoples Policy during its 19th Board Meeting. This policy was the response to the constant concerns of Indigenous Peoples to avoid any negative impacts on activities that are financed by the Fund and that supports the rights of Indigenous Peoples and defines compensation for any unavoidable harm that Indigenous Peoples might suffer. Another objective of the policy was to ensure that Peoples are fully and effectively involved in consultations at all levels when developing Indigenous Peoples' policies, projects and programs, allowing them to benefit from GCF activities and projects in a "culturally appropriate manner"².

There are many important elements to know if these actions are having a "do-good" rather than a "do-no-harm" effect, and that is why monitoring the actions of the Green Climate Fund, but especially the actions taking place on our lands and territories as Indigenous Peoples, is so important.

¹ Green Climate Fund (GCF), which was defined during COP 16 in Cancun, the parties established the GCF as the operating entity of the financial mechanism of the Convention. And developing countries committed to mobilize US\$100 billion from 2020 onwards.

² An Indigenous Peoples toolkit on the green climate fund indigenous peoples' policy (2020) Tebtebba Foundation ver en:

<https://www.tebtebba.org/index.php/component/fileman/?view=file&routed=1&name=IP%20Toolkit%20on%20GCF%20and%20the%20IP%20Policy%20%28English%29.pdf&container=fileman-attachments>

Why do we believe it is important to monitor?

Indigenous Peoples have recognized the importance of monitoring processes that have impacts on our lands and territories as a way of exercising our right to self-determination and self-governance. When talking about climate actions that are implemented in our lands and territories, the elements that come up are: to have knowledge about the actions, the possible positive or negative impacts that these actions could have on the Peoples, how our rights are included and how we are going to be involved in the processes.

In the case of the GCF, with the Indigenous Peoples policy and its implementation guide, all these elements are supposed to be integrated in the discussions of the entire project cycle of the proposals that reach the Board. But how can we be sure that this is the case when there is no disaggregated data that includes the ethnic variable in the projects?

This first project approved by the GCF was a clear example that elements of Indigenous Peoples' rights that are recognized at the international level may not be integrated or considered in the definition of the financing proposal that reaches the Board, and yet it was a project that was approved - remember that at the time of approval of this proposal, the Fund did not have an Indigenous Peoples' Policy.

Even so, after the approval of the policy, we have seen approval of funding proposals that could affect indigenous territories and there is no clear, open and transparent data matrix. We have also seen Accredited Entities (AE) delivering funding proposals that do not have the necessary documentation related to Indigenous Peoples under the idea that there are no Indigenous Peoples in the areas of execution of the actions, and on many occasions, these Peoples are made invisible. Also, it is observed later in the review process of the network of civil society, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, we realize that the situation is different at the local level.

The great unknown remains—how much climate finance reaches the territories, communities, and Indigenous Peoples? In the Green Climate Fund so far there is no mechanism to know how much funding reaches Indigenous territories, what is clear is that direct access to funds by Indigenous Peoples is not a reality. We have seen some positive examples where Accredited Entities and Designated National Authorities have included Indigenous Peoples to be beneficiaries in Preparation Projects and in some proposals to be implementing entities, but it is not the norm and there is no specific data that exposes this information. Each year, we see an increase in the number of projects that the GCF is approving, without knowing the specific amount that is allocated to Indigenous Peoples.

In the absence of clear, open, and transparent data, Indigenous Peoples cannot make informed decisions, violating their rights to self-determination in their lands and territories. Monitoring is important because we will also be able to identify whether the Fund's policies, and in our case especially the Indigenous Peoples Policy, are being implemented efficiently. Monitoring processes can help to follow up on whether the policies, criteria, and objectives of the GCF and its policies are being met.

Therefore, Indigenous Peoples have developed different mechanisms to follow up and monitor the actions of the GCF in their territories and, from this need, the Indigenous Peoples Tracker in GCF Projects was born.

Tracker of Indigenous Peoples in GCF Projects³

The Indigenous Peoples Tracker in GCF Projects is a platform developed by Tebtebba and Elatia. The tracker was launched in November 2022. This platform is dedicated to monitor the projects approved by the GCF in Indigenous territories. This is a specific platform that looks for specific sources important to Indigenous Peoples.

The tracker wants to go beyond just looking at how the Fund has been implementing its Indigenous Peoples Policy and considers it crucial to understand the full portfolio of the GCF in relation to Indigenous Peoples, as there is no comprehensive data on how many projects are being implemented in Indigenous territories, what these projects are and how they will impact Indigenous Peoples.

The idea is to ensure that Indigenous Peoples are better informed and more proactive in their relationship with States, accredited entities and financial entities, as well as with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). To this end, a baseline will be established to analyze and monitor these processes within the GCF. Above all, it is expected that this platform will be a space for exchange among Indigenous Peoples in relation to GCF projects.

Beyond monitoring

Monitoring should be an important element to follow up on GCF financing actions and to identify which commitments are being fulfilled; but above all, it is necessary that this monitoring leads to an evaluation of the performance of GCF projects, especially those related to the impact on Indigenous Peoples.

Transparency in climate finance is still a big challenge, especially when it has to do with the information to which Indigenous Peoples have access. It is therefore necessary to work more actively in the dissemination of information and to achieve ownership of these data.

Access to data will also give us the possibility to report on the transparency and accountability of the Fund. We sometimes find examples of contradictory climate actions in the same countries where they invest in climate action, but, at the same time, they are investing in actions that can be harmful to the environment and especially to indigenous lands and territories, which can impact the cultural survival of Indigenous Peoples.

What elements should be included in the monitoring, evaluation and reporting of climate actions financed by the GCF?

³ See: <https://iptracker.tebtebba.org>

It is vitally important that the actions financed by the GCF are coherent with its Indigenous Peoples Policy and that they are effectively included in the definition of the financing proposals that reach the Board of Directors for approval.

These elements that cannot be missing and that are already integrated in the Indigenous Peoples Policy are: the recognition of the rights of Indigenous Peoples to use their lands and territories; the right to free, prior, and informed consent; and active and effective participation in the entire cycle of the Fund's projects.

Challenges and opportunities in climate finance tracking, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting

The challenges in relation to monitoring, evaluation and reporting on climate finance in the GCF by Indigenous Peoples have great challenges that are framed in the need to further strengthen the capacities of Indigenous Peoples at national and local levels, to be able to follow up and respond adequately to external processes that want to reach our lands and territories.

From the new current context of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the challenges have increased, Especially because access to information has been limited and because much, if not all, of the GCF climate finance information is in English which, then, greatly limit the number of people who can access it, especially among Indigenous Peoples.

It is, therefore, important to be able to generate a two-way path between the Indigenous Peoples themselves and the GCF so that information specifically reaches those communities and territories affected by the Fund's investments—especially information that is culturally relevant to Indigenous Peoples.