



Office of the President

Shiv Chanderpaul Drive, Bourda

Georgetown,

Guyana

22 April 2022

Amerindian Peoples Association

Dear APA Members,

As the focal point of the Programme on Lowering Emissions by Accelerating Forest Finance (LEAF), the Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC) wishes to thank you, the Amerindian Peoples Association (APA), for your 12 April 2022 correspondence. The DECC addresses your feedback in turn.

1. How will indigenous communities be included in the proposed LEAF emissions reduction program?

Guyana's engagement in any programme on carbon markets will be at the national scale. The draft Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) 2030 outlines that 15% of all earnings from this national engagement will go towards indigenous villages and communities, including forest-based communities, through a mechanism developed with inputs from the communities themselves. The earned proceeds will complement other benefits to forest-based communities from national programmes such as infrastructure, renewable energy, micro and small enterprise development, and the extensive list of programmes outlined in the LCDS. Further, there has been no commitments to LEAF or any buyer to date through several expressed expressions of interest.

2. What will be the mechanisms for full and effective participation of our elected representatives (Village Councils, District Councils and the National Toshaos' Council) in decision making around the LEAF program?

This question will be answered threefold:

- a. The National Toshaos' Council (NTC) shall represent the elected representatives of indigenous communities and serve on the Multi-Stakeholder



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Steering Committee (MSSC), which is the decision making body of the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS).

- b. Elected representatives will also participate through additional forms of involvement, primarily through their village councils.
- c. The land titling programme, which is the main mechanism for securing land tenure for Indigenous Peoples, was stalled under the previous Administration. The programme has since been restarted under the PPP/C Administration, and the total land area under the Amerindian title has doubled and is recorded now at 14% of Guyana's land area.

3. Why have our elected representatives not been included in any discussions about the LEAF program until now, especially since the Government has proposed the inclusion of all our lands in the program?

- a. The LCDS 2010, which laid the early framework for low carbon development in Guyana, including forest carbon credits, was subject to extensive national, regional and community-based consultations. This Strategy, which has been and remains on a national scale, was discussed at the community and National Toshias' Council levels and received full endorsement. The central tenet of the LCDS has been one where communities benefit from revenues earned from the programme of forest carbon services. LCDS 2030 seeks to advance the work started in 2010 under the first LCDS.
- b. Under the Guyana Norway Agreement, with a total of US\$220M earned under the Agreement, a wide range of programmes that benefitted communities directly were implemented.
- c. Guyana's engagement in the Architecture for REDD+ Transaction and the LEAF Coalition commenced as a next step, identified in the first LCDS as moving to a broader market-based mechanism for forest carbon services, taking off from the successes of a bilateral engagement.



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- d. Guyana's engagement with the LEAF Coalition is at the initial stage. There has been no commitments to LEAF or any buyer to date through several expressions of interest that have been expressed.
- e. Engagement with all stakeholders, including elected indigenous representatives, will be facilitated by the Government, which at this juncture, is focused on building the awareness of all Guyanese on the national, overarching LCDS 2030 and soliciting their feedback to refine and finalize the current draft.

4. How will the proposed opt-in mechanism be designed with our full and effective participation, and how will our communities' free, prior informed consent be ensured?

- a. The Opt-In Mechanism is not new and was outlined under the first LCDS in 2010. Over the last 12 years, many engagements, studies, and field assessments have been completed, including on Community MRV models. LCDS 2030 outlines a plan for the mechanism that will include titled and untitled communities and forest and non-forest based ecosystems.
- b. Discussions regarding the Opt-In Mechanism and programmes implemented as part of LCDS 2030 will be identified by villages and communities. This will form part of Village Plans. All activities implemented at the village level will have to be developed by villages before implementation.
- c. Engagement in forest carbon marketing will also ensure the full and effective participation of local and Indigenous peoples in line with the Cancun Safeguards¹

5. How will our indigenous customary lands, and not just our titled lands, which form just a small part of the territories we have traditionally used and occupied,

¹ www.leafcoalition.org



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be included in the LEAF program, and the opt-in mechanism proposed as the main vehicle for sharing benefits?

- a. As outlined in LCDS 2010, which was broadly consulted on and endorsed by communities, including the National Toshaos' Council, the approach to LCDS 2030 is a national scale and involves a benefits sharing system for indigenous villages and communities integrally.
- b. Participation in the LCDS programming at the community level will include all lands, covering titled lands, unknown lands, and customary lands. It will also include forest as well as non-forest ecosystems.

6. What will be the specific mechanisms by which monetary benefits will be shared with our communities to conserve our forests?

- a. All benefits will flow to communities as committed to in the LCDS 2030 and will finance village plans that villages will develop.

7. What will be the process and timeline for designing a safeguard information system for Guyana? How will our participation, and the inclusion of our proposals, be ensured?

- a. Guyana has submitted its Summary of Information on REDD+² Safeguards to the UNFCCC³. The document is publicly available on the UNFCCC website. It has developed a reporting framework as reflected in Guyana's submission under the Architecture for REDD+ Transaction (ART) on Safeguards which is also publicly available on the ART website. Proposals recommended at the community level can be made to the DECC.

² REDD+ - Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation

³ UNFCCC – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change



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8. What will be the national and international mechanisms to ensure the Government of Guyana's compliance with the ART-TREES⁴ standards regarding timely access to information, full and effective participation, respect for our rights to lands and territories and traditional knowledge of the redress of grievances, and equitable benefit sharing?

- a. There are requirements verifying validating the status and progress of all aspects of the Guyana programme within the ART programme, including safeguards. Information sharing, grievance and redress mechanisms, stakeholder involvement and other principles are all included in these safeguards to which the Government assures Guyana's commitment.

We trust that these responses have addressed your questions. Please feel free to follow up as your engagements continue.

Kind regards,

Project Manager

Department of Environment & Climate Change

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⁴ TREES – The REDD+ Environmental Excellence Standard